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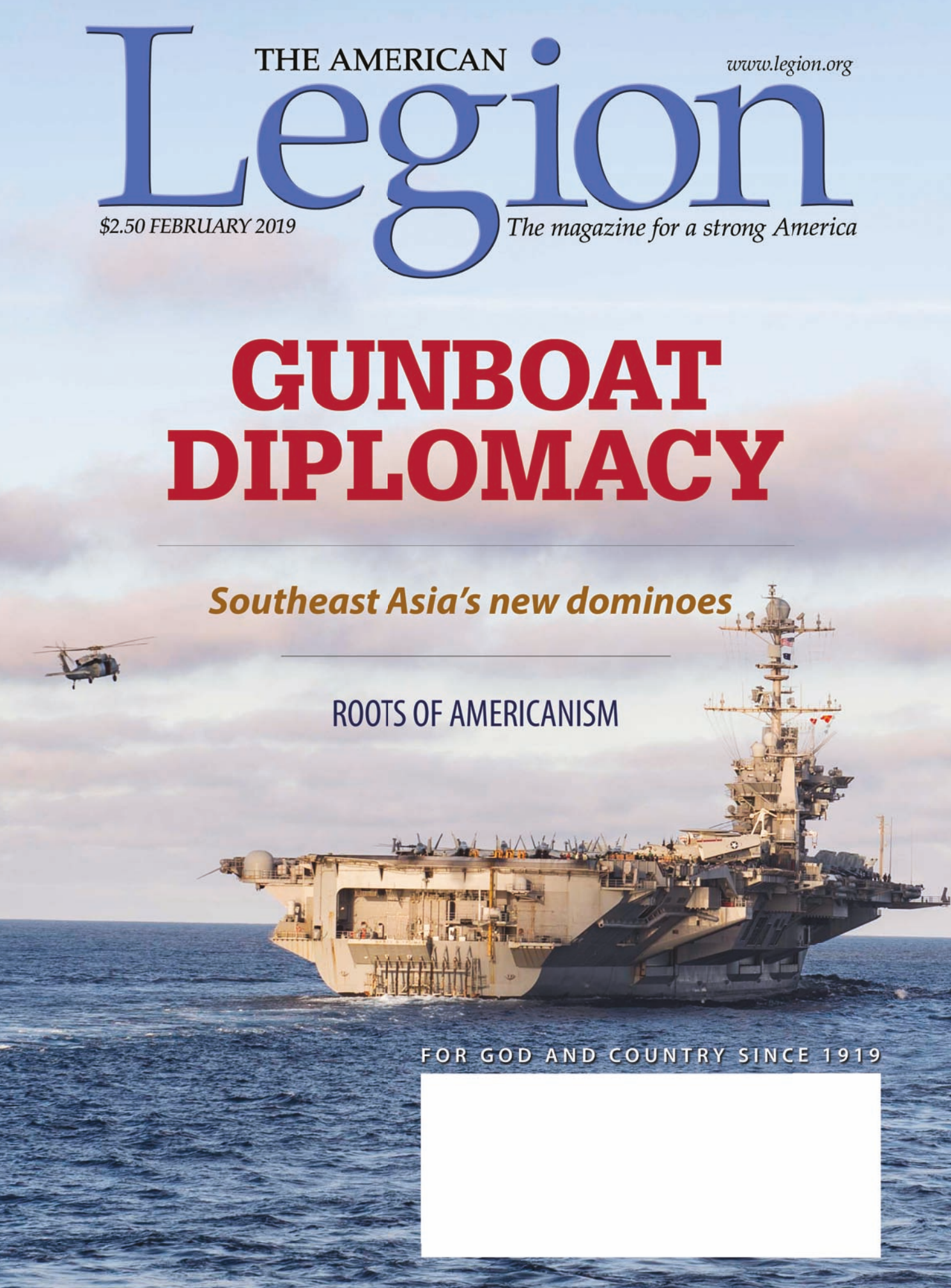
\$2.50 FEBRUARY 2019 *The magazine for a strong America*

GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY

Southeast Asia's new dominoes

ROOTS OF AMERICANISM

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY SINCE 1919

A large US Navy amphibious assault ship, the USS Tarawa (LHA-5), is shown sailing on the ocean. A helicopter is visible in the sky to the left of the ship. The ship is a complex of white and grey structures with various antennas and equipment on its upper decks. The ocean is a deep blue with some whitecaps. The sky is a mix of blue and light orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the bottom right corner, there is a large white rectangular area, likely a placeholder for a photo or advertisement.



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OVERDUE HONOR

Decades after being injured in the line of duty during World War II, former Army Cpl. Francis Byrne, 94, is awarded a Purple Heart medal during a ceremony at Elliot Hospital in Manchester, N.H., on Dec. 14. Byrne is a 14-year member of Henry J. Sweeney American Legion Post 2 in Manchester.

Photo by Elizabeth Frantz

The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 13,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

ON THE COVER

The aircraft carrier *Harry S. Truman* conducts a replenishment-at-sea Dec. 5, after more than three months in the Arctic Ocean, and Norwegian, Mediterranean and Adriatic seas. In 2018, the *Truman* carrier strike group deployed to key waters to send a message to Iran, Russia and U.S. allies. Learn how the United States uses gunboat diplomacy on **Page 22**. U.S. Navy



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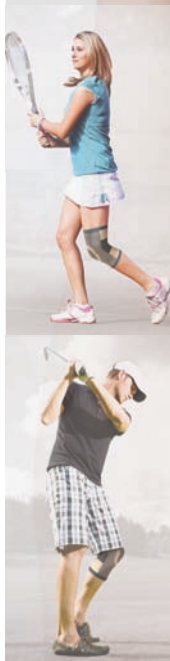
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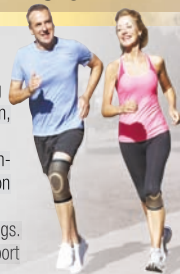


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DETROIT (312) 348-1206
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LOS ANGELES (213) 596-7215

Copyright 2019 by The American Legion

The American Legion (ISSN 0886-1234) is published monthly by The American Legion, 5745 Lee Road, Indianapolis, IN 46216. Periodicals postage paid at Indianapolis, IN 46204 and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The American Legion, Data Services, P.O. Box 1954, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Canada Post International Publications Mail (Canadian Distribution) Sales Agreement No. PM40063731. Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to: Station A, P.O. Box, Windsor ON N9A 6J5. Re-entered second-class mail matter at Manila Central Post Office dated Dec. 22, 1991.



Printed in USA
Member Audit Bureau of Circulations

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Letters from the Great War

With each issue, I quickly turn to the letters from D.B. Ryan (Rapid Fire, December). His beautifully crafted words give one the perspective of how war affects a soldier, his family and his love of country. His longing for home and freedom is one and the same. Please continue this genuine narrative.

– Susan Swift, Stratham, N.H.

On World War I veterans

National Commander Brett Reistad asked American Legion members to speak up if our post was named after a World War I veteran (Commander's Message, December). I am commander of Weld-Webster Post 55 in Canaan, N.H. Cpl. Verne Weld was a World War I Army veteran who was killed in action in France in 1918.

– Lyle Frizzell, Newport, N.H.

They were heroes also, but not recognized for a job well done.

Our small community has three men still living who served in World War II. One was at Pearl Harbor when it was bombed; his story needs to be told while he is still around. With the number of veterans we lose every day, all stories are important.

– Areta A. Bleeding-Laird, Eads, Colo.

U.S. Space Force

President Trump and his staff have done many positive things, but I do not agree with the plan to create another military branch called the U.S. Space Force (Big Issues, December). The current Air Force is the place for the needed Space Force, not another overgrown, money-hungry branch.

I hardly ever agree with Democrats, but on this issue I do at least agree with one of their representatives.

– Robert C. Kraft, Dallas

Creation of a space force is a stupid idea. First and foremost is a commitment we made with other nations years ago about not weaponizing space. The mention of a military force in charge of space says we want to start an arms race in space. Nothing good will come of that.

The Air Force is good at strategic air defense. Anyone who would dispute that does not know the hard work the Air Force continues to do today to keep senior-level commanders abreast of potential enemy actions. Let a TU-95 depart an airfield anywhere in Russia. I guarantee you the Air Force knows it before the Bear gets to cruising altitude. In fact, the entire command structure from the president on down knows it because of these airmen.

In the cyber realm, we have the best in the world. From the early days of the Army Security Agency, the Naval Security Group, Electronic Security Command and Marine Support Battalion (SIGINT), we have controlled the airwaves. The descendants of these great services are masters of the cyber battlefield. They need not be yanked out because someone wants a new military branch. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

– James Dawson, Elwood, Ind.

Funny stuff

I just wanted you to know that it's so nice to have your Parting Shots actually be funny. So many papers and magazines have "jokes" that are not the least bit funny. Thanks!

– Richard Gilbeck, Westby, Wis.

Janus ruling

As a life member, I could not believe what I read in Vet Voice regarding unions (December). Yes, unions were necessary for working conditions to improve for workers in labor-intensive industries. They literally were recruited as they came off the boat at Ellis Island. My father was one of those who helped the Amalgamated Union, paying dues and helping to organize workers since 1929. But first they had to fight off the communists who tried to take over. Later on, they were less successful when mobsters saw labor organizing as a lucrative business. It took quite a long time to get rid of the mob, and in some cases they never did.

My father retired after years of service and paying union dues – he got no pension, nothing. Yes, unions did a lot, but they turned crooked in many cases.

– Joseph Schvimmer, Pikesville, Md.

'The War That Didn't End'

Regarding Jay Winter's article (November), I felt he failed to show decent empathy for Americans who served there. He states, "Fortunately, only 50,000 American soldiers died in combat" Fifty thousand fortunate dead! Why could he have not said, "Unfortunately, in just over one year of U.S. involvement in the Great War, 50,000 Americans were killed in combat"? Why did Winter consider America's contribution just a "bloody nose"? Did not the wives, fathers, mothers, siblings and even children mourn just as much for each death just as if it

had happened in the Civil War or World War II or other wars?

I am an Army veteran. I was stationed in Verdun, France, from 1960 to 1963. The Verdun Great War battle was one of the worst of World War I, with many casualties and much destruction. Not only was some of the destruction still evident in 1960, but also the effect on the area and its people. In my readings about the Great War, the American people thought their efforts were substantial, and the families and nation mourned their losses too.

– Gerald Stark, Mesa, Ariz.

Hero at the local level

As far as I am concerned, all American Legion members are heroes, and I have the highest regard for those who have taken positions above the post level within the organization. But to see a member who has not done so receive recognition (I Am The American Legion, September) fills my heart with pride. This article really caught my attention because of the POW/MIA reference. For Brian Galarza to put up that table – when many companies would not allow it – and then see it moved to a more prominent place at a major airport shows tremendous initiative. Thank you, Steve B. Brooks, for helping prove what I have thought for a long time: the majority of Legion heroes are at the local level.

– Lyle E. Lieb, Metropolis, Ill.

Editor's note: On the January table of contents, two A-10 Warthogs were misidentified.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE WELCOMES YOUR OPINIONS

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1. Maselli DJ, Amalakuhan B, Keyt H, Diaz AA. Suspecting non-cystic fibrosis bronchiectasis: What the busy primary care clinician needs to know. *Int J Clin Pract.* 2017;71(2):e12924.
2. Basu S, VA/DoD Issue First COPD Guideline Update Since 2007. *U.S. Medicine.* 2015.
3. Martínez-García MA, de la Rosa Carrillo D, Soler-Cataluña JJ, et al. Prognostic value of bronchiectasis in patients with moderate-to-severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med.* 2013;187:823–831.

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The need to rebuild a strong U.S. military

Two more years of sequestration – forced reduction of defense spending due to the federal government's failure to balance the budget nearly a decade ago – may be two years too many.

The United States has gambled with global security and imperiled lives, cutting some \$500 billion in defense investment over the last decade, nearly half of which was modernization funding. Meanwhile, China has built island bases, Russia has developed new nuclear weapons, North Korea has tested intercontinental missiles aimed at distant targets, and the Middle East remains an ever-shifting sandstorm of turmoil and terrorism. Foreign adversaries have also moved ahead of the United States in the evolving realm of cyber-warfare capability.

These are among concerns identified by the nonpartisan National Defense Strategy Commission. The first paragraph of the commission's most recent report succinctly states the current U.S. condition:

"The security and well-being of the United States are at greater risk than at any time in decades. America's military superiority – the hard-power backbone of its global influence and national security – has eroded to a dangerous degree. Rivals and adversaries are challenging the United States on many fronts and in many domains. America's ability to defend its allies, its partners and its own vital interests is increasingly in doubt. If the nation does not act promptly to remedy these circumstances, the consequences will be grave and lasting."

The challenge is daunting, but it's not too late to restore U.S. military strength and our role as defender and protector of global and national security. The commission offers three key recommendations:

- Defense spending must increase 3 to 5 percent, on top of annual cost-of-living adjustments, just to catch up against sequestration.
- Congress must pass on-time DoD budgets and end the cycle of continuing resolutions that stagnate military investment.
- Sequestration must be lifted to give the Pentagon and our troops the best opportunity to succeed, for our allies and for the homefront.

Strengthening the National Security Innovation Base is listed as a high priority in the report. That "will entail a mix of near, medium and long-term initiatives" to include "rapidly reinforcing and sustaining" forward-engaged forces, protecting information systems from attack and advancing technology across multiple areas of need – command, communications, intelligence and reconnaissance, to name a few.

In a very large nutshell, the commission calls on Congress, the White House, DoD, and we the people to rebuild our military and overhaul a U.S. defense strategy that has lost ground over the past decade. Last August, the 100th American Legion National Convention passed a resolution aimed at reversing the effects of sequestration, calling on Congress to never allow "our military forces to reach a weakened state in these uncertain and perilous times."

If those times are not now, they are coming. Inability to make hard decisions and re-invest in peace through U.S. strength, the commission concludes, would be a tragedy "all the more regrettable because it is within our power to avoid it."




National Commander
Brett P. Reistad

MEMORANDA

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

Members of the American Legion Family will visit Capitol Hill during the 59th Washington Conference, Feb. 24-27. Meetings with congressional representatives, activities and workshops are planned.

Highlights of the conference include the "Know Before You Go" legislative briefing, the Commander's Call, and American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad's testimony before Congress. Watch the national website for the latest schedule, news and live streams.

 legion.org/washingtonconference

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"Who are you?" Jason Feimster wants to know.

That's not the post commander's icebreaker. It's Feimster's way of leveraging the interests, skills and abilities of members into various programs at Dyer-Gunnell American Legion Post 180 in Vienna, Va. Under Feimster's leadership, the post became the first in the Department of Virginia last year to hit the 100 percent membership goal.

He credits a two-step process: engage members and prioritize programs.

"That's the secret sauce," says Feimster, who served in the Marine Corps from 2005 to 2010. "I will always preach programs. The American Legion is a well-greased machine. You can't ignore the fact that it is 100 years old. A lot of the success is our underlying programs."

As a post-9/11 veteran, Feimster understands why his peers need to feel not only welcome but connected. Under his leadership, the post has redesigned its website and expanded its social media presence. Those efforts work in concert with one-on-one interaction.

"At the end of the day, membership is not just an annual thing," he says. "We want them for the rest of their lives. You have to know the person. Not the veteran, not the engineer, not the secretary – the human being. And that's why I usually start with that question: 'Who are you?'"

– Henry Howard

BRANCH OF SERVICE Marine Corps (2005-2010)

RANK Corporal

MILITARY JOB Combat marksmanship instructor


AMERICAN LEGION POST Dyer-Gunnell Post 180, Vienna, Va.

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- National American Legion College graduate (2017)
- Department Veterans Employment & Education Committee chairman (2018-present)
- Department Leadership College instructor (2018-present)
- District Media & Communications Committee chairman (2018-present)
- Post commander (2017-present)

Watch an interview of Jason Feimster online:

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
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Photo by Eric Kruszewski

JASON FEIMSTER

"My biggest responsibility as a Legionnaire – at any level, any office – is to care."

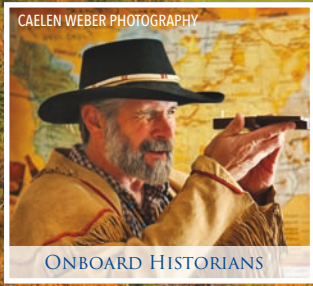
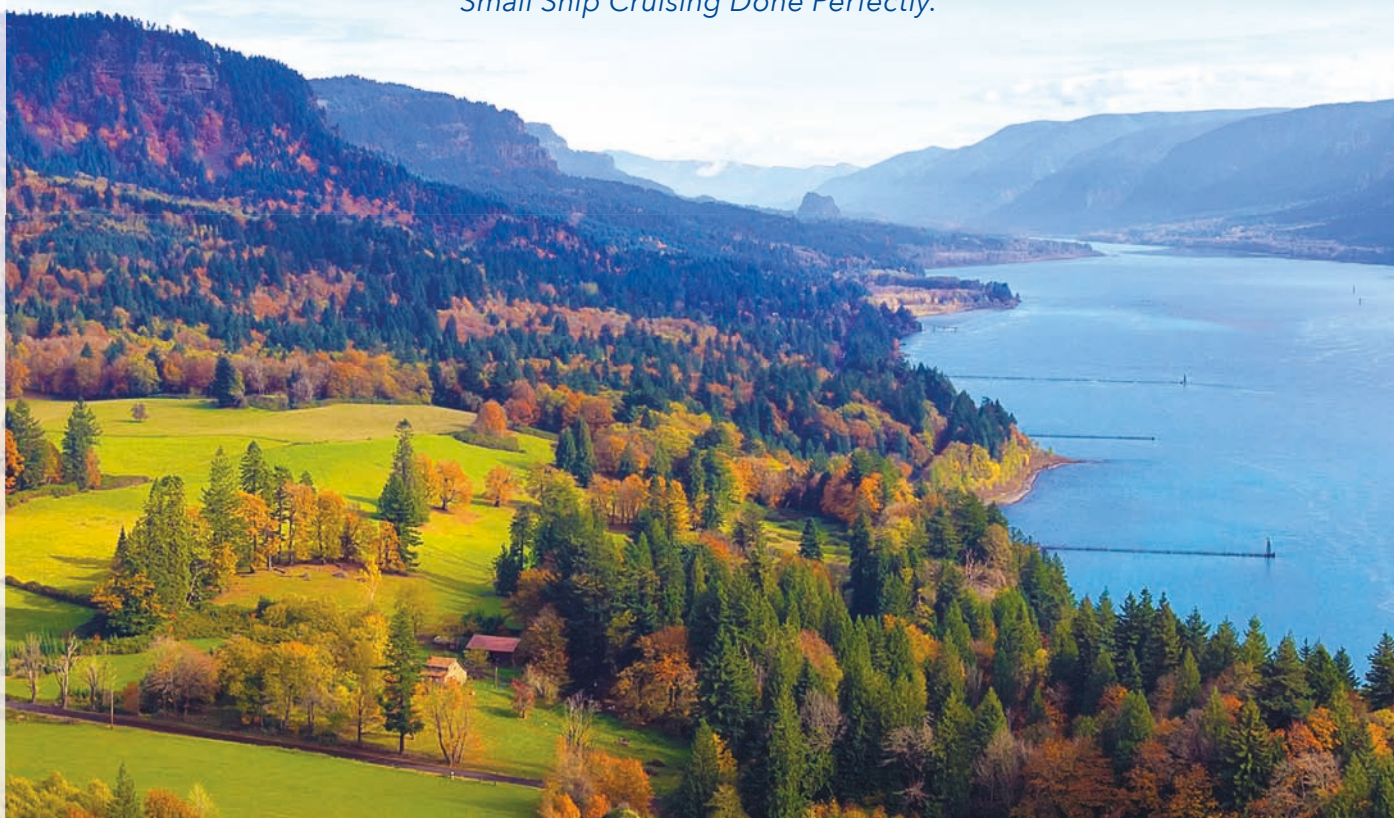




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The fundamental threat to our country today is the loss of faith in our nation's institutions. The presidency. Congress. The courts. Public schools. Churches. Newspapers. Organized labor. Name an institution other than the military, and Americans have far less confidence in that institution today than they did 10 years ago.

Restoring faith in these institutions is what conservatism is all about. These building blocks of civil society and government are what our movement seeks to conserve. But conservatism does not mean just mindlessly defending the status quo. Often our institutions fail because they are in need of reform.

This does not mean they need to be completely torn down and rebuilt from scratch. Such radical restructurings often backfire and end up hurting the very populations they were intended to help. The job of conservative statesmen is to discern which reforms are consistent with our principles and will restore faith in our institutions, and which are too far-reaching and will only further undermine that which we seek to conserve.

The First Step Act is common-sense criminal justice reform that will make communities safer. The bill has two main elements: prison reform, which seeks to reduce recidivism by encouraging participation in rehabilitation and re-entry programs, and sentencing reform, which ends the Clinton-era crack vs. powder cocaine discrepancy and expands the existing mandatory minimum safety valve for non-violent offenders.

The First Step Act is modeled after proven reforms in tough-on-crime states like Texas and Georgia. That is why it has been endorsed by groups like the Fraternal Order of Police and the International Association of Chiefs of Police.



OPPOSE

Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark.

■ Cotton is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The First Step Act is a proposed bill in the Senate that would make sweeping changes to our federal criminal justice system. While the bill's supporters have good intentions, their hasty revisions will result in early release of dangerous criminals back into our communities.

According to the Department of Justice, the First Step Act allows federal prisoners, including sex offenders, to get new early-release credits by participating in "evidence-

based recidivism-reduction programming or productive activities." These new credits are in addition to existing "good time" credits and are worth up to one-third of the offender's sentence.

The first problem is that "productive activities" is defined so that playing softball, watching movies or doing activities the prisoners are already doing will result in new time credits. Why let hardened prisoners out early if they don't even have to change their behavior to earn earlier release? Also eligible would be inmates who have committed drug-related robberies involving assault with a deadly weapon, use of a deadly weapon to assault a law-enforcement officer, and violent carjacking resulting in serious injury.

The First Step Act has other flaws. It allows judges more discretion to ignore the mandatory minimum sentence for criminals with prior records. And even though 72,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2017, it reduces the penalty for trafficking the highest quantities of fentanyl described in federal law.

Instead of relying on summaries, read the bill and letters from law-enforcement organizations that came to the same conclusion I did: the bad in this bill outweighs the good.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE
The First Step Act lowers mandatory sentences for some drug offenders and gives judges more latitude in their decisions. Critics say the law would result in the early release of thousands of violent felons.

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WHOLE PERSON HEALING

Media Bakery

In too many cases, doctors and patients seek a quick fix for low back pain.

BY LANCE FRAZER

Low back pain affects 540 million people worldwide. In the United States, it triggers 2.6 million emergency room visits every year, and total costs amount to more than \$100 billion annually. According to some researchers, it also results in a global overuse of unnecessary tests and treatments such as imaging, opioids and surgery, “(which) means patients are not receiving the right care, and resources are wasted.”

According to Julie Fritz, adjunct professor of physical therapy and athletic training at the University of Utah School of Medicine, back pain is so common that almost all of us will experience it at some time, suggesting that part of the risk factor is being human.

A number of lifestyle factors can contribute to this problem, she adds, including a low level of physical activity and a sedentary lifestyle. “It’s hard to narrow the causes down too closely, because this problem is so common across all populations.”

Allston Stubbs, professor of orthopaedics at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, says causes can include traumatic injury, but they can also be low-energy – “‘I slept funny,’ or moved ‘wrong.’ Problems with the hips or pelvis can also trigger low back pain, and we’re also learning more about the role stress can play in the triggering of physical pain.”

Part of the complexity comes from being “one of the few animals that stands on two feet, (and) the only one I know of that spends time sitting for hours at a time,” says Clark Smith, an interventional spine medicine specialist at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center. “Pretty much everything we do – running, sitting, jumping, lifting – meets (in the back).”

Kay Leissner, Anesthesiology, Critical Care and Pain Medicine Service chief at the VA Boston Healthcare System and member of the American Society of Anesthesiologists, says back pain has a broad list of causes, especially in Western populations. “Our way of living, the foods we eat, the weight we gain, the way we lift things – the list goes on.”

Additionally, genetic and infectious-disease components can affect the back.

A study published in *The Lancet* in 2018 stated that evidence suggests that low back pain should be managed in primary care, with the first line of treatment being education and advice to stay active. However, “a high proportion of patients worldwide are treated in emergency departments, encouraged to rest and stop work, are commonly referred for scans or surgery, or prescribed painkillers including opioids, which are discouraged for treating low back pain.”

In too many cases, treatment providers and patients try for a quick fix, which is why some 60 percent of the people who go to the ER with back pain are prescribed opiates, Leissner says.

William Lauretti, professor of chiropractic clinical sciences at New York Chiropractic College, would like to see a paradigm shift toward treatment of the whole person – “to increase their ability to do things, rather than a narrow focus on getting rid of the pain,” he says. “The medical profession also has a tendency to overprescribe surgery, which then ties back to the opioid issue, because surgery is the most common reason to get hooked on opioids.”

See **HEALING** on page 16

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Healthy bones and a healthy you

Keeping our bones healthy as we age can keep the rest of our body healthy and help prolong our lives, HealthDay reports, citing a study of people older than 50 suffering from “fragility fractures.” These are bone breaks caused by a fall “from a standing height or less.”

The study found that a broken bone in older age may increase risk of death for 10 years following the break.

“A fracture is the starting point for much wider health issues that persist long after the fracture has healed, and can ultimately result in earlier death,” said study author Jacqueline Center of the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Australia.

The numbers are stark. In the year after breaking a hip, men had a 33 percent higher risk of death, and women a 20 percent higher risk. In the year after femur or pelvic fractures, the risk of death rose between 20 and 25 percent.

The study revealed a higher risk of death 10 years after a hip fracture, and five years after non-hip fractures.

“While intervention after the first fracture is critical, we also need to diagnose those at risk of breaking bones before these major health impacts have occurred,” Center said.



Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

HEALING *continued from page 14*

Leissner points to the Boston VA as a facility that has created what he calls a “whole health service” as one path for the future.

“The Boston VA has created an innovative system that includes things like yoga courses, guided meditation, stress-reduction therapies and acupuncture – a therapy that has been very well received by the veteran population we treat.”

Last March saw the signing of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, which expanded access to the chiropractic industry’s non-drug approach to pain relief to veterans, broadening services provided by chiropractic doctors under the Preventive Health Services and Medical categories. However, an October study by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health found that Medicaid, Medicare and major commercial insurers’ coverage for non-drug options for treating chronic low back pain provides “little or no coverage for interventions such as acupuncture and psychological counseling.”

To improve your odds, Smith says to work on modifiable risk factors – “things like inactivity and controlling your weight. Smoking is another factor that doesn’t get enough attention. It damages the small vasculature of the body – causing, some studies have shown, an increased incidence of back pain.” At least one study has also suggested that avoidance of fast and highly processed foods can reduce low back pain by decreasing fractures of the vertebrae and helping prevent bone loss.

Leissner and others also recommend looking at non-interventional therapies, including exercise regimens, cognitive behavior therapies, yoga, meditation and stress-reduction therapies.

People need to understand that life will be better in six months if they focus on physical therapy for the next six weeks than it would be if they were put on pills, Smith says. “The main thing for me is the concept of multidisciplinary spine care. The VA is working on that, Columbia is working on that, and the future looks encouraging.”

Fritz adds that it is up to you, the patient, to take the initiative. “Your role is not passive.”

Lance Frazer is a California-based freelance writer specializing in health and medicine, science, nature and the environment.

An ‘F’ for e-cigs

Contrary to some opinions, e-cigarettes can pose a serious health risk to users. According to a new study published by a University of California San Francisco (UCSF) research team, use of e-cigarettes every day can nearly double the odds of a heart attack.

The study, which surveyed nearly 70,000 people and was published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, found that dual use of e-cigarettes and conventional cigarettes – the most common pattern among e-cigarette users – appears to be more dangerous than using either product alone. Daily use of e-cigarettes and tobacco cigarettes raises the heart-attack risk fivefold when compared to people who don’t use either product.

E-cigarettes deliver lower levels of carcinogens than tobacco cigarettes, but like the latter they have “ultrafine particles” and other toxins linked to increased cardiovascular and non-cancer lung disease risks.

“While people may think they are reducing their health risks, we found that the heart attack risk of e-cigarettes adds to the risk of smoking cigarettes,” said study author Stanton Glantz, a UCSF professor of medicine. “The risk of heart attack starts to drop immediately after you stop smoking Our results suggest the same is true when they stop using e-cigarettes.”



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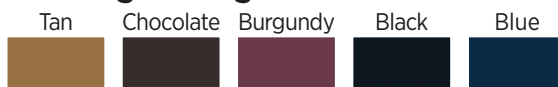
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Photo courtesy Carnival Cruise Lines

5 Reasons to Go On a Cruise

See more, pack less on a vacation that can satisfy the entire family.

BY LYN METTLER

Beach or mountains? Europe or the Caribbean? Hotel or vacation rental? There are lots of decisions to make when it comes to planning your next getaway, including whether you'll travel by car, by plane or by ship. Many people prefer cruising vacations, and here are five reasons why:

UNPACK ONCE One of the big benefits of cruising is staying in the same accommodations while visiting multiple places, rather than packing and unpacking at each destination. "When traveling aboard a small ship, you don't have to worry about hotels, which may have dropped your reservation," says Barbara Banks, director of marketing and new trip development for Wilderness Travel, which offers small-ship cruises around the world. "Instead, you get to return to comfortable accommodations with freshly prepared food each evening, and you only have to unpack your bags once."

SEE MULTIPLE DESTINATIONS Another perk of cruising is the opportunity to see several destinations all on one trip, without having to worry about spending days in airports getting from place to place. Whether you choose a river cruise through Europe, a Caribbean cruise to various islands or a trip down the Mississippi, multiple stops will be on the itinerary, allowing you to spend time at each one but return to your same room each evening.

ALL-INCLUSIVE Many cruises are all-inclusive, so you worry less about budgets and spending when trying to relax on vacation. All costs are paid in

advance, typically with food, alcohol and activities included in the price. Cruise ships today usually offer multiple dining options, from fast casual restaurants to bars to more elegant alternatives. Not everything is included in an all-inclusive trip, however, especially gratuities or shore excursions, so make sure you understand what is and is not part of the package.

AFFORDABILITY Cruising tends to be an affordable way of traveling, with deals often lower than \$200 per person per night on some major cruise lines. Matt Kepnes of NomadicMatt.com says you can find deals as low as \$30 per day. Such low prices may relegate you to an interior room with no ocean view, however, and there are often additional fees like taxes and port expenses on top of the price. To score a low price, try booking close to the departure date or when kids are in school.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE Looking for a vacation for multiple generations? A cruise could be the perfect solution. Cruise ships typically have many different types of activities on board, from gambling and nightlife to kids clubs and waterslides. The children can hang out at the pool while Grandma and Grandpa walk the decks and Mom and Dad get a drink at the pool bar. Then everyone can come together for a fun shore excursion or to watch a show on the ship at night.

Lyn Mettler is a freelance travel writer who blogs at GotoTravelGal.com.

Baby boomers are eager to travel in 2019, according to AARP's annual travel trend survey released in December. The survey indicates they plan to take four or five leisure trips this year and spend more than \$6,600.

The **Air Force One Experience** is open to visitors in National Harbor, Md. Actually a Boeing 747 that served as a Pan Am plane and then a cargo plane, the aircraft has been transformed into a replica of the president's Air Force One. Tickets are \$19.99 for seniors and military, excluding tax.



Photo courtesy Air Force One Experience

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Late-hour Blue Water Navy push fails

BY TOM PHILPOTT

Republican Sen. Mike Enzi of Wyoming, Senate Budget Committee chairman, and Mike Lee of Utah blocked two late-hour efforts by colleagues to pass Blue Water Navy legislation that would have made tens of thousands of ailing veterans who served on ships off Vietnam eligible for Agent Orange-related disability compensation and health care.

Both senators, in opposing the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act (H.R. 299), echoed concerns of VA Secretary Robert Wilkie that there still isn't credible scientific evidence tying shipboard service in territorial waters off Vietnam to health conditions presumed to be associated with the spraying of herbicides on jungles to expose enemy positions.

The Congressional Budget Office strengthened their stand with a new cost estimate indicating the House bill wasn't properly funded.

The House passed H.R. 299 unanimously in June, with a provision to offset the cost of expanding Agent Orange benefits to Blue Water Navy veterans by raising fees on veterans who use the VA home loan program. CBO at the time said the higher fees would more than cover costs of the bill, even creating several hundred million dollars in budget savings for VA. But in a December letter to Enzi, CBO delivered a revised estimate that "incorporates additional information" its auditors didn't have when the House bill passed.

Because many more veterans and survivors could qualify for Agent Orange benefits than previously projected, CBO said, VA spending would climb by \$1.1 billion over the next decade.

The Blue Water Navy bill seemed to have enough momentum to become law in 2018 after clearing the House without dissent. But it stalled in the Senate, and last August Wilkie and his staff vigorously attacked the bill. The shift at VA was jarring, given that just last year then-Secretary David Shulkin expressed support.

Wilkie and his undersecretary for benefits, Paul Lawrence, said it would be wrong for Congress to extend Agent Orange benefits to Blue Water sailors without sound evidence they were exposed to

harmful amounts of herbicides while at sea. It would create a disastrous precedent for VA to award benefits for wartime exposures if the science is uncertain, they argued.

Blue Water Navy advocates counter that Congress has given many thousands of veterans who served on land or patrolled Vietnam rivers the same benefit of the doubt they seek for ship crews that streamed near to shore.

The funding mechanism for H.R. 299 also became more controversial after July. Major veterans service organizations that supported the detail in June came to oppose language that for the first time would charge home loan fees to certain disabled veterans – those with ratings below 100 percent who use a new jumbo loan feature to buy more costly homes.

Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, tried to reshape the bill to satisfy both VA and VSOs. By late November he was out of time. That's when Isakson and Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, ranking Democrat on the committee, negotiated solely with veterans groups to drop opposition to the House funding plan and accept the bill as passed by the House, on condition that Isakson and Tester would work in the new Congress to tweak the VA loan formula again and ensure that no disabled veteran would face new fees.

On Dec. 9, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., introduced a motion to pass H.R. 299 by unanimous consent. Isakson endorsed it, arguing the long-overdue expansion of benefits would be fully paid for in the bill. Enzi cited the revised CBO cost estimate, adding that VA's own analysis said the actual costs might be double that. He also said there is great uncertainty over how many veterans and survivors would be eligible. The current range is between 60,000 and 440,000 – "a pretty big gap."

Enzi then used the authority every senator has to block the unanimous consent vote. Within six minutes of Gillibrand filing her motion, it failed.

Tom Philpott has been covering military personnel and veterans issues for more than 40 years.



VA argues that awarding benefits to Blue Water Navy veterans would set a disastrous precedent.

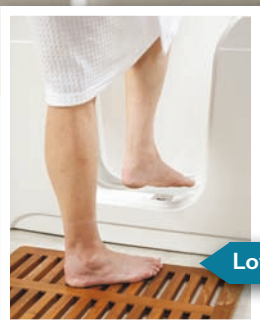
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A WHITTLED ‘BIG STICK’

For effective gunboat diplomacy, America needs to rebuild its arsenal.

BY ALAN W. DOWD

President Theodore Roosevelt was fond of quoting the African proverb, “Speak softly and carry a big stick.”

For Roosevelt, the big stick was the U.S. Navy, which he deployed frequently to underscore that America’s words were not empty – and that its interests would be defended.

Neither he nor the United States invented what’s known as “gunboat diplomacy.” Egyptian ruler Ramses III likely employed it before and after he engaged in the first recorded naval battle in 1186 B.C. Many seafaring powers followed suit in the intervening centuries – especially the United States. Throughout America’s history, presidents have used this unique form of statecraft to promote the national interest and preserve some semblance of international order – all without going to war or actually using the big stick.

MESSAGES A good definition of gunboat diplomacy is any deployment of military assets or implied use

of them – gunboat diplomacy is not solely the province of the Navy – intended to coerce or persuade an adversary to alter its behavior. The operative words are “deployment” and “implied.” Once military assets are used in anger, once bombs start flying, gunboat diplomacy has passed from the threat of war into actual war – and has failed.

A Congressional Research Service tally of U.S. military deployments since the nation’s founding includes dozens of maneuvers and shows of force aimed at securing U.S. interests without going to war. The first of these dates to 1815, when Commodore Stephen Decatur’s naval squadron conducted maneuvers off Tunis and Tripoli, securing indemnities for offenses during the War of 1812. Other examples include naval maneuvers off the Ivory Coast to discourage piracy (1843), near Turkey “to remind the authorities of the power of the United States” (1850s), around Japan to enforce treaties (1850s and 1860s) and in Haiti to gain the release of a captured ship (1888).



Roosevelt elevated gunboat diplomacy into an art form. While there are many examples of him brandishing the big stick, two stand out.

The first came in 1902-1903. After Venezuela's failure to make good on its debt payments, German and British warships began prowling the Caribbean – and threatening America's special role in this hemisphere. Historian Edmund Morris captures Roosevelt's sentiment: "If Germany and Britain wanted to splash in the same water, they must play by American rules."

The rules would be enforced by the Navy. Roosevelt dispatched 53 warships to the region. Knowing that Britain and Germany had just 29 ships in the region – and that Britain had no desire for war with America – he gave Germany 10 days to pull back. As far as the rest of the world was concerned, Roosevelt privately explained to a German emissary, the U.S. armada was there on routine, preplanned maneuvers. But he warned, "If Germany took any action that looked like the acquisition of territory in Venezuela or elsewhere in the Caribbean ... I should be obliged to interfere, by force if necessary." The kaiser got the message and backed down.

Morris also recounts the strange story of Ion Perdicaris, an on-again-off-again American citizen who had been kidnapped by Moroccan warlord Mulai Ahmed er Raisuli. After Roosevelt dispatched seven warships to the Moroccan coast, his secretary of state issued a blunt telegram: "Perdicaris alive or

Raisuli dead." The Moroccan government, pressured by the gunboats, found a way to free Perdicaris.

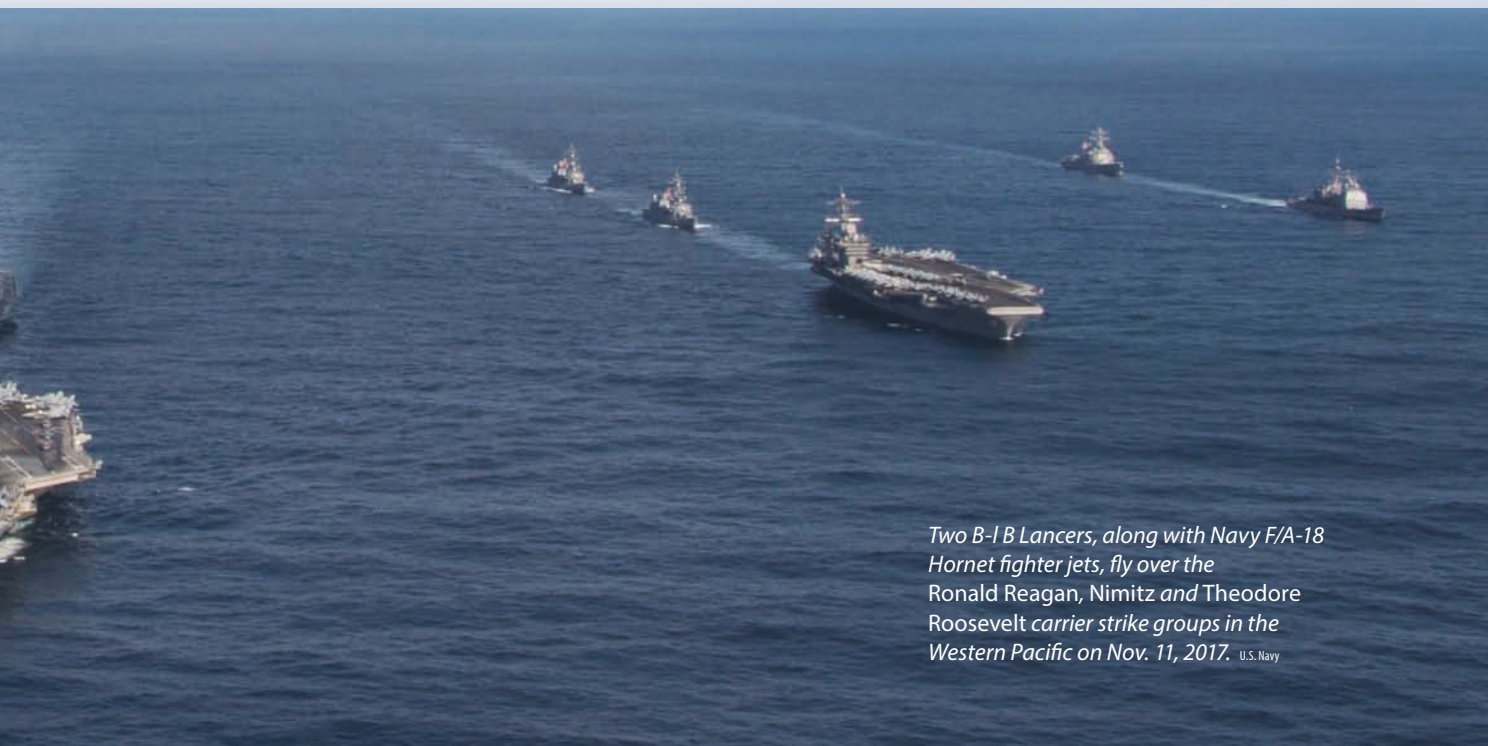
As he approached the coastal city of Tangier, Perdicaris caught a glimpse of the source of his regained freedom: "the mastheads of Adm. (F.E.) Chadwick's ships." Overcome with emotion, he whispered a quiet prayer of thanks for "that flag ... that people ... that president ... those frigates."

After the world wars, when gunboats were used for combat rather than diplomacy, President Harry Truman returned to Roosevelt's playbook – albeit with a new kind of "gunboat." During Stalin's blockade of West Berlin, Truman deployed nuclear-capable B-29 bombers to Europe to bolster the Berlin Airlift – and send a signal to Moscow.

In 1950, Truman dispatched the 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Strait to prevent the two Chinas from attacking each other.

Likewise, President Dwight Eisenhower ordered warships to the waters around Taiwan, this time to protect Taiwan after mainland forces began shelling Taiwanese territory. He also updated gunboat diplomacy for the nuclear age, with what came to be called "atomic diplomacy."

In 1953, Eisenhower effectively ended the Korean War by warning the Chinese he was prepared "to expand the war outside of Korea" and "use the atomic bomb." In 1955, he suggested he was willing to use atomic weapons to defend Taiwan. He underlined the strategic-deterrence concept known



Two B-1B Lancers, along with Navy F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets, fly over the Ronald Reagan, Nimitz and Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike groups in the Western Pacific on Nov. 11, 2017. U.S. Navy

as “massive retaliation” by deploying 36 percent of America’s hydrogen bombs and 42 percent of its atomic bombs overseas – and expanding the U.S. nuclear arsenal 18-fold during his presidency. Eisenhower’s steely response to Khrushchev’s boast about the Red Army’s overwhelming conventional edge in Germany captured the essence of his updated version of gunboat diplomacy: “If you attack us in Germany,” Eisenhower explained, “there will be nothing conventional about our response.” Khrushchev got the message.

When Soviet nuclear-missile bases were discovered in Cuba, President John F. Kennedy used gunboat diplomacy to avert war and denuclearize the island. More than 60 warships were dispatched to the waters around Cuba. Ninety nuclear-armed B-52s began round-the-clock orbits over the Atlantic. As historian Paul Johnson details, “800 B-47s, 550 B-52s and 70 B-58s were prepared with bomb-bays closed for immediate takeoff.” Moscow blinked.

During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, after Brezhnev threatened unilateral Soviet intervention, the United States “responded by putting its nuclear forces on worldwide alert,” a State Department report explains. The Soviets were “utterly shocked,” as a Nixon Foundation analysis recounts. That, of course, was the Nixon administration’s intent. Moscow got the message and, again, backed down.

Four months before he unleashed Operation Desert Storm, President George H.W. Bush hoped a massive deployment of U.S. military assets to the Gulf would persuade Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait. “Perhaps your leaders do not appreciate the strength of the forces united against them,” he explained to the Iraqi people and military. “Let me say clearly: There is no way Iraq can win ... Iraq must withdraw from Kuwait.”

As if to underline the point, a *Time* magazine article featuring photos of the president and America’s gathering naval firepower was headlined “Read My Ships.” Alas, death-wish dictators are seldom persuaded by the mere threat of force.

To show its displeasure with Taiwan’s first direct democratic presidential elections and with Washington’s willingness to allow Taiwan’s president to visit the United States, China launched a flurry of missile drills in the Taiwan Strait in 1995-1996. In response, President Bill Clinton sent the carriers *Independence* and *Nimitz* to the region. The latter even transited the Taiwan Strait – the first time a U.S. aircraft carrier had done so since 1979. The missile drills ended, Taiwan held its elections and war was averted.

Most Americans know about the 1993 gun battle in

Mogadishu, which claimed 18 U.S. servicemembers. What’s less well-known is how the Clinton administration secured the release of captured U.S. helicopter pilot Michael Durant.

As Mark Bowden details in “Black Hawk Down,” Somali warlord Farrah Aidid demanded the United States free 70 of his men in exchange for Durant. In response, Washington sent veteran diplomat Robert Oakley to Mogadishu to paint a picture for Aidid’s interlocutors: “Just look at the stuff coming in here now,” Oakley observed. “An aircraft carrier, tanks, gunships The minute the guns start again, all restraint on the U.S. side goes. Once the fighting starts, all this pent-up anger is going to be released. This whole part of the city will be destroyed – men, women, children, camels, cats, dogs, goats, donkeys, everything,” he matter-of-factly explained. “That would really be tragic.”

Aidid agreed to release Durant “immediately.”

DETERRENCE Gunboat diplomacy remains a tool of U.S. statecraft in the 21st century.

In 2004, the Pentagon simultaneously surged seven carrier strike groups into five theaters of operation. When asked if the global exercise was designed to send any signals, an admiral coyly responded, “I think that’s advantageous.” The Navy reprised the feat in late 2017, sending seven supercarriers to sea, with three carriers – *Ronald Reagan*, *Theodore Roosevelt* and *Nimitz* – exercising together in the Western Pacific.

In 2015, two days after Beijing flew bomber aircraft near Taiwan’s airspace, a pair of Marine Corps F-18s landed in Taiwan – the first such landing in 30 years. In 2018, after People’s Republic of China warships conducted drills near Taiwan, a U.S. Navy vessel made a surprising stop to refuel in Taiwan. The Pentagon said the unexpected visit by American F-18s was due to “a mechanical issue.” Taiwan’s military insisted the Navy drop-in was “unrelated to military activity.” But given the timing, it seems Washington was sending a message: Taiwan is not alone.

In response to China’s construction of illegal islands in international waters, the Obama and Trump administrations ordered U.S. warships to conduct freedom-of-navigation operations around the islands. Not coincidentally, 2018 saw U.S. aircraft carriers make eyebrow-raising stops in Vietnam (the first since 1975) and the Philippines (the first since 2014).

The Air Force also brandishes the big stick. As part of its “continuous bomber presence,” the Air Force has been flying B-52s above the South China Sea

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since 2004 to maintain open skies and prevent Beijing's *de facto* annexation of international airspace and seaspace.

In 2009, B-52s flew from Guam to Australia, F-22s deployed from Alaska to Guam and Japan, and B-2s were dispatched to Alaska in high-profile shows of force. In 2013, when China declared an air-defense identification zone over a vast swath of the East China Sea, Washington sent a flight of B-52s through the area to enforce freedom of the skies. Likewise, in 2015, B-52s flew within two miles of the "Made in China" islands to reject Beijing's illegal claims.

Much of the Air Force equivalent of gunboat diplomacy in the Pacific is directed at North Korea:

- When North Korea began threatening war in early 2013, Washington deployed F-22s to South Korea and sent B-2s on unusually – and purposely – high-profile maneuvers over the peninsula.
- The Obama administration deployed B-2s to Guam in 2015, and flew B-52s over South Korea in 2016.
- In 2016, Air Force officials made a point of noting that a B-1B's "low-level flight near the DMZ" was "the closest a Lancer has ever flown to the border of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and North Korea." It also marked the first time in 20 years B-1Bs had landed in South Korea.
- Only twice in history – in August 2016 and January 2018 – have B-52s, B-2s and B-1Bs deployed to Guam at the same time.
- In 2017, B-1Bs flew from Guam to South Korea, where they conducted bombing drills alongside U.S. F-35s and South Korean F-15s "two to three times a month," according to ROK defense officials.
- In December 2017, a week after North Korea tested an intercontinental ballistic missile, the United States and ROK conducted joint drills involving 230 warplanes, including long-range bombers and stealth fighter-bombers.
- Ahead of the 2018 Olympic Games in South Korea, the Air Force deployed three B-2s to Guam in a deterrent signal to North Korea.

In response to Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine, Washington rushed F-15s and F-16s to the Baltics and Poland. B-52s and B-2s deployed to Britain. F-22s were dispatched to Britain, Poland, Lithuania and Romania. A strike force of 16 B-52s and B-2s conducted strategic exercises. And Exercise Polar Roar sent B-2s and B-52s on nonstop flights over the Northern Pacific, Arctic and Baltic Sea.

Again in 2017, B-2s, B-1Bs and B-52s deployed to Britain "to demonstrate ... flexible global-strike capability," the Air Force explained.

Jim Lewis of the U.S. Naval Institute and Robby Harris of the Naval War College note that a mid-2018

deployment of the USS *Harry Truman* carrier strike group "sent a message to Iran and our partners Then, in a very unexpected move, *Truman* left the Mediterranean to operate in the North Atlantic ... to send a signal to the Russians."

Land-based units also conduct a kind of gunboat diplomacy. The Pentagon returned heavy armor to Europe in 2014 as a message to Moscow: crossing this line means you are going to war against the United States – no ambiguity or doubts about the consequences. That certainty of response – the promise that the costs of aggression will be greater than any potential benefits – is the essence of deterrence, and it works.

WHITTLED Gunboat diplomacy is the power of persuasion on an international scale. Like their predecessors, Presidents Obama and Trump have employed it to defend U.S. interests, promote a liberal international order, reassure allies and deter foes. The Trump administration credits "our campaign of maximum pressure" – all that saber-rattling around North Korea – with "creating the appropriate atmosphere for dialogue with North Korea."

To be effective, gunboat diplomacy requires guns and boats – and planes, tanks and personnel. Regrettably, sequestration hacked away at these precious resources. A Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments study notes that in constant dollars, defense spending fell by nearly one-fourth between 2010 and 2015.

As a result, the Army's active-duty end strength by 2016 was smaller than it was on the eve of 9/11. The Air Force is "the smallest and oldest it has ever been," the branch reports. In 2016, after five years of sequestration, Marine aviation units were forced to salvage parts from museums.

By the end of 2016, the Navy had only 275 ships, down from 316 on 9/11. The fleet's current size isn't close to America's maritime needs. "For us to meet what combatant commanders request," former Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan Greenert observes, "we need a Navy of 450 ships."

Recent defense budgets have ended sequestration's maiming of the military. However, a couple of budget cycles are not enough to repair the damage. "It took us years to get into this situation," Defense Secretary James Mattis concludes. "It will require years of stable budgets and increased funding to get out of it."

In the interim, presidents will have to make do with a whittled-down big stick. 🌿

Alan W. Dowd is a senior fellow with the Sagamore Institute Center for America's Purpose.

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THE NEW DOMINOES

Former U.S. allies in Southeast Asia are falling not to communism, but to hard-line authoritarianism.

BY BEN BARBER

Because of the domino theory, we sent 2.7 million Americans to fight the communists in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, in rice paddies and deep jungle canopy far from home.

Generals and politicians told us we had to fight, because if South Vietnam fell to communism, Thailand, Singapore, India and the Middle East would follow.

As it turned out, the theory was wrong. The dominoes never fell. Used to justify a war that resulted in 58,000 U.S. dead, the domino theory would remain a historical footnote for the next 40 years.

After the communists took Saigon, Phnom Penh and Vientiane in 1975, the red wave stalled. In Thailand, nationalism and a beloved king blocked

the domino effect. Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and other U.S. allies in Southeast Asia all relied on capitalism, free markets, nationalism and the U.S. nuclear umbrella to guarantee security.

The only dominoes falling were the gray and unproductive socialist systems that emerged in Indochina after the end of the conflict. These planned economies took a decade to smell the coffee, then decided to try to end their poverty and join free-market capitalism. Those moves toward free markets swept across China and Vietnam, bringing prosperity but without freedom and democracy.

Now a new wave of dominoes – call them bamboo dominoes – is falling as countries neighboring Indochina give up their freedoms.



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They want the benefits of capitalism without all the lip from bloggers and democracy groups. The result is a rising wave of authoritarian regimes from Burma to Thailand to Indonesia.

Journalists are jailed or exiled. Human rights groups are banned and shuttered. Opposition political leaders are arrested, beaten or barred from disseminating views contrary to those of the government.

Burma, for example, shrugged off British colonial legal systems but made a small feint toward democracy in 2014. Before and since, it remains a repressive country. It has long used fear of ethnic rebellions to rally unquestioning support for violent military rule. Hill tribe fighters who made it through malarial jungles to the Thai border have told me of rape, murder, burning villages, forcible recruitment and other terror by Burma's army. When peace talks seemed to bear fruit, the fighting would reignite, possibly to gain support from the ethnic Burmese who are the core of the country.

Some say Burma has never seriously moved toward democracy and is an anchor of repression ready for the new bamboo curtain in Southeast Asia. "Things have gone from bad to worse," says Tom Andrews, president of United to End Genocide, a group that monitors violence between Buddhists and Muslims in Burma, according to *Foreign Policy*.

The dread that communist dominoes would push into free U.S. allies in Southeast Asia has been replaced. Instead of communism, it is hard-line authoritarianism that is taking over our former allies – a bamboo curtain, spreading underneath the national borders like bamboo in a backyard.

"Not since World War II has liberal democracy seemed so deeply endangered in so many places," says Dan Slater, director of the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies at the University of Michigan, writing in the *East Asia Forum*.

"This is a region where authoritarian regimes have always easily outnumbered democracies, and where liberalism and universalism have always struggled to gain traction Southeast Asia is and always has been well on its way to being a democratic abyss."

The shift to authoritarianism is partly due to local cultures that tend to frown on free exchanges of criticism. History plays a role, too: the United States after the Vietnam War gradually withdrew from the whole of Southeast Asia, seeing it as a failure despite the best intentions.

Murray Hiebert is a Southeast Asia expert with

the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington. In 1991, we traveled together in a car across Cambodia from Phnom Penh to Battambang, where at night we heard Vietnamese artillery pounding Khmer guerrillas on the Thai border.

Hiebert recently revisited Vietnam and found it booming. It seeks closer ties to Washington, in part to fend off the sticky embrace of giant China. Beijing is frightening smaller neighbors as it builds the Belt and Road Initiative to spread China's trade and influence globally. And China is not talking about human rights.

The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) was a new trade pact meant to economically link the United States with smaller Asian nations, including in Southeast Asia. Like NAFTA, the TTP would have helped all member states get duty-free access to the U.S. economy – and U.S. exporters to get free access to the growing Asian markets. But President Trump pulled out of the accord, and it now languishes as China expands.

The countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations want trade with China but also want U.S. engagement in the region "as a hedge in case China gets rough," Hiebert says. Yet these concerns are pushing our former allies toward dictatorship in hopes of fending off the growing Chinese power.

Consider today the levels of democracy and freedom in a region U.S. soldiers gave their lives to defend:

- Thailand has plunged into authoritarian rule by the army that seized power four years ago. When I was a journalist based in Bangkok in the 1980s, the Thai newspapers were fairly free and honest. In the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand, reporters joked that the Vietnamese would never make a domino out of Thailand because Vietnam's tanks and troops could never get through traffic. And that traffic meant a booming economy. Aside from avoiding all criticism of the widely admired late king, Bhumibol Adulyadej, you felt you were in a mostly democratic country with a lively press and politics. No more. The king has passed away, and the military is tightening its grip on power.
- Cambodia has been ruled by the increasingly authoritarian Hun Sen since 1979. He recently jailed opposition party leaders and closed the last free newspaper, *Cambodia Daily*. Sen's ties to China are growing ever stronger, allowing him to spurn Western concerns about human rights.
- Malaysia is essentially a one-party state whose leader, Najib Razak, was accused of massive

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corruption and fraud, lost a bid for re-election and is now under arrest.

- Singapore has long been ruled by a one-party government founded by the late Lee Kuan Yew. He called the strict system of social and political control the Asian Way, which he believed to be superior to the chaotic, democratic West.
- Burma's long-ruling military allowed free elections in 2015, which brought Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi into Parliament. But she has no real power. She also failed to criticize the expulsion of 600,000 minority Muslim Rohingyas to Bangladesh earlier this year.
- Elected in 2016, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte abolished some civil rights and ordered police to kill all suspected drug users or dealers. He also turned toward China as a model, ignoring Chinese occupation of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea that are claimed by five nations.
- More and more, Indonesia is in the thrall of Muslim hard-liners, who in 2017 voted out the first Christian mayor of Jakarta over blasphemy accusations.

Hiebert notes that a wave of liberal, semi-democratic leaders swept the region in the previous decade (the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand), somewhat opening up their press and electoral systems. The U.S. nuclear umbrella helped the region grow with few security concerns in the 1980s, supporting democratically elected leaders. Yet much of Southeast Asia finds the confrontational politics of democracy to be unnerving. Leaders find that loss of face when opponents voice criticism is a humiliation that if left unanswered weakens their hold on power.

Gradually things started changing. In Burma and other tightly controlled societies, the introduction of cellphones, the Internet, and independent radios and TV stations caused leaders to shrink back from democracy. "Democracy is nascent – brand-new," Hiebert says.

The reduction of U.S. military and diplomatic engagement in the region after the Vietnam War allowed the shift to hard-line rulers.

China has become a more important market than the United States for several of these countries. Beijing buys their rice and motorbikes and sends millions of Chinese tourists flush with cash from China's explosive economic growth.

The United States still conducts extensive exercises with Thai and other militaries in the region. But it is a far cry from the 1980s, when the Navy and Air Force had bases at Subic Bay and Clark in the Philippines.

The residual power of U.S. forces in the region was seen during the 2004 tsunami off Indonesia, which killed more than 230,000 people across the Indian Ocean. From the wreckage of Banda Aceh, I saw survivors peering through the maritime haze at the gray shape of the carrier *Abraham Lincoln*, which raced from Singapore to bring food, medicine and water. But even humanitarian interventions, which assist millions each year around the world, are quickly forgotten as the drumbeat of Chinese power spreads.

Vietnam recently objected to China moving a drilling rig into South China Sea waters claimed by both countries. When Hanoi sent patrol boats to observe, they were quickly driven off by superior Chinese boats.

Then, when Vietnam sent its own drilling rig into contested waters, China warned it to stop, which it did.

Fearful and admired by smaller nations, China and Russia are now leading a worldwide resurgence of authoritarianism, especially in Southeast Asia. Russia backed Hanoi with weapons during the Vietnam War, contributing to the U.S. death toll. We paid it back in the 1980s by arming Afghan mujahedeen fighters, who used our Stinger missiles against their helicopters.

Today Russia is a regional authoritarian leader rather than a global threat, focused on backing authoritarian movements in what was once called the Soviet Union's "near abroad": Hungary, Ukraine, the Baltics, the Balkans, Georgia, Armenia, the Central Asian "stans" and even Turkey, Syria and Venezuela.

In Southeast Asia, where so many Americans put their lives on the line for people who wanted democracy and freedom, it is China undermining political, social and religious freedom.

In countries from Indonesia to Iran, U.S. efforts to nurture democracy have come up against ancient cultures that do not honor or appreciate the rough-and-tumble of Western-style democracy. Our harvest after so many years of engaging their leaders in trade, diplomacy and education is meager at best. At worst, we face a new generation of leaders who understand American democracy but simply don't want it to take root in their homelands. 🌿

Ben Barber has been a journalist for more than 30 years. His articles have been published in The Washington Times, USA Today, the London Observer, The Huffington Post and McClatchy newspapers.

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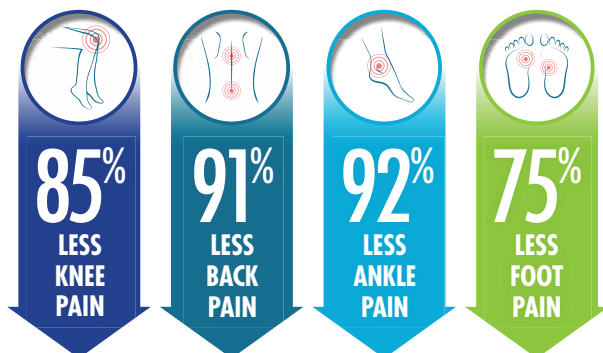
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TO STRENGTHEN A NATION / THE AMERICAN LEGION STORY

PART 6

THE DEFINITION OF AMERICANISM

American Legion founders believed they had a duty to spread understanding and love of country.

BY JEFF STOFFER

HISTORICAL CONTEXT IS VITAL to understand how Americanism urgently arose as a pillar of what would become the nation's largest veterans organization. American Legion founders, the core of whom were front-line officers in World War I, had emerged from the all-volunteer prewar Preparedness Movement with firsthand concern about the prospect of combat with limited resources, weapons, training and supplies. After the armistice, they added another ingredient to their concerns: public understanding and appreciation of the American identity.

Only about half of America's teenagers attended high school regularly at the time. A large percentage of World War I troops were conscripted immigrants, some of whom had barely begun to learn English as a second language, which caused communications breakdowns in the service. Most were under-educated in U.S. government, law and history. Few understood what the U.S. flag represents or how American "justice, freedom and democracy" are defined when compared to other nations.

And, to the disgust of those who marched off to the Great War in Europe, thousands of otherwise military-eligible adult immigrants had used their foreign citizenship to avoid service, no matter how long they had lived in the United States. The early Legionnaires had a term for them: "alien slackers." To address this issue, the early American Legion set U.S. citizenship among immigrants as a top priority.

The American Legion's

founders were deeply concerned how the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia might spill over into the United States. Communist recruiters were already pitching their thinking to young Americans, including troops still stationed in Europe after the armistice. Fascism and Nazism later appeared on the global landscape and recruited in the United States at a time before media or policymakers fully understood the intentions of

Benito Mussolini or Adolf Hitler. The American Legion was early and firm in its opposition to anti-democracy ideologies; they had fought "to make the world safe for democracy." To the founders of the Legion, the best kind of "ism" was Americanism.

Racism was specifically denounced by the early Legion, which passed a resolution in 1923 that remains on the books and condemns any individual, group or organization that "creates or fosters racial, religious or class strife among our people, or which takes into their own hands the enforcement of law, determination of guilt, or infliction of punishment, to be un-American, a menace to our liberties and destructive to our fundamental law."

The Veterans Day parade massacre of 1919 in Centralia,

FIVE POINTS OF AMERICANISM, 1919

Much of the 20th century's definition of patriotism – love of country – was either conceived or greatly amplified by The American Legion. A committee to tackle this sprawling interest was formed in November 1919 at the 1st American Legion National Convention in Minneapolis, to:

1. Combat all anti-American tendencies, activities and propaganda
2. Work for the education of immigrants, prospective American citizens and alien residents in the principles of Americanism
3. Inculcate the ideals of Americanism in the citizen population, particularly the basic American principle that the interests of all the people are above those of any special interest or any so-called class or section of the people
4. Spread throughout the people of the nation information as to the real nature and principles of American government
5. Foster the teaching of Americanism in all schools



In 1936, The American Legion began using this image on the cover of its annual Americanism manual. The American Legion Archives

"The Legion is to be built on a rock, on the Constitution of the United States – a strong fortress of patriotism and a great machine of service and constructive citizenship."

Marquis James, "A History of The American Legion," 1923

Wash., which took the lives of four Legionnaires and a deputy sheriff and led to the mob lynching of one suspected killer – a member of the radical Industrial Workers of the World (or "wobblies") – galvanized the newly founded veterans organization, then meeting at its first national convention in Minneapolis. The massacre showed that the conflict between Americanism and other "isms" could turn deadly.

The American Legion would take a proactive approach to Americanism, forming a committee that would become a national commission to advance the concept through programs and services. By January 1920, citizenship and naturalization programs were forming at local posts, and the Legion offered its services before Congress to provide such education.

In 1921, The American Legion formed an alliance with the National Education Association, which accepted the Legion's offer "to cooperate with the NEA in securing for America a program of education adequate to meet the needs of the 20th century ... and which will make all, whether native or foreign-born, good American citizens." The alliance led to National Education Week and the 1926 publication of a two-textbook set, "The Story of Our People," written by historians under American Legion direction.

The Legion's Americanism Commission led the first of two national flag conferences in 1923, bringing together representatives of 68 other interests – military, education, government, civic and business – to establish what in 1942 became U.S. Flag Code. By that time, most states were requiring the Legion rules. The

organization would ultimately become known as a national ambassador of flag respect and protection.

The American Legion founders believed veterans should be catalysts in local unity and assistance, strengthening communities and building pride through individual obligation. "We must continue to serve the country in the same spirit we had in war, and we can do that only if we have every post doing something for its community," American Legion Past National Commander Hanford MacNider said when introducing what was called the "Iowa Idea" in 1923. The Americanism Commission led the movement and launched a nationwide Community and Civic Betterment Bureau that brought hundreds of parks, pools, theaters, clinics, bands, sports programs and forums into

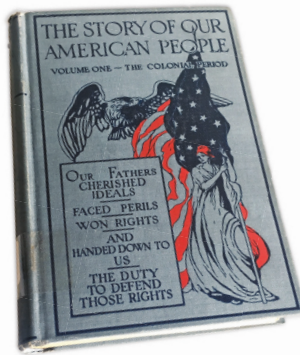
existence, led by American Legion posts.

Pennsylvania American Legion posts began presenting school awards as early as 1921 to students who were evaluated on five points: honor, courage, scholarship, leadership and service. The school awards program, which continues today, was adopted nationally in 1926, inspiring generations of young people to serve proudly in their communities.

When the Great Depression struck, American Legion posts fed the poor and unemployed in their communities. When natural disasters hit, the Legion rescued victims, provided security, built refugee camps, fed the stranded and helped communities rebuild. All such activities, though some were overseen by different commissions of the organization,

were considered expressions of Americanism.

Throughout the decades, American Legion youth programs were established and operated to do more, for instance, than teach young people to hit baseballs and bullseyes. American Legion Baseball, which traces its roots to the Department of South Dakota convention of 1925, originated when Maj. John Griffith, commissioner of the Big 10 Conference, told delegates that sports could do more than serve as “an amusement feature for ourselves in the post ... but as a matter of citizenship training.”



National Education Week in 1926 led to the publication of a two-textbook set, "The Story of Our People."

The American Legion Archives

American Legion Boys State, which began in Illinois in 1935, was a direct response to the communist-inspired Young Pioneer Camps attempting to lure U.S. youth. Boys State took off across the country and established itself as a program like none other to teach young people how government functions in a successful democracy. Through the years, Boys State inspired thousands of future leaders, including President Bill Clinton, Vice President Dick Cheney, NASA astronaut Neil Armstrong, CNN co-founder Lou Dobbs, Purdue University President Mitch Daniels and college football coach Nick Saban.

Following the same reasoning, the American Legion Oratorical Contest, which had its first national competition in 1938 and now awards more than \$138,000 in scholarships annually to top finishers, is not all about

MOMENTS IN AMERICANISM HISTORY



NOV. 12, 1919 Boy Scouts of America is the first youth program singled out for official American Legion support.

JULY 7, 1921 The National Education Association accepts The American Legion's offer to help develop public school curricula on history, civics and citizenship.



JUNE 14, 1923 The American Legion Americanism Commission leads the first of two national conferences that establish rules of respect for the U.S. flag, later adopted as U.S. Flag Code.



JULY 17, 1925 American Legion Baseball originates in Millbank, S.D. A resolution at the 7th National Convention in Omaha makes it a national program.

OCT. 8, 1925 The Americanism Commission is authorized to develop a formal collaboration with the American Red Cross to provide disaster relief.

NOV. 9, 1926 Originating five years earlier in Pennsylvania, the American Legion School Award program becomes national, honoring eighth-grade boys evaluated on five points: honor, courage, scholarship, leadership and service.



JUNE 23, 1935 Illinois Legionnaires Harold Card and Hayes Kennedy organize the first American Legion Boys State program.



SEPT. 23-26, 1935 Delegates at the 17th American Legion National Convention pass a resolution opposing Nazism, communism and fascism, all of which are recruiting in the United States and ultimately leading the world back to war.

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This exclusive early release is richly plated in 99.9% silver. Special sepia-toned artwork on the reverse recreates a photographic image of Allied troops on D-Day. Adding to its impact, the border features a *portion of authentic sand from Normandy Beach*, making this non-monetary tribute part of the 75th anniversary commemoration. The obverse features the Allied plan of attack plus a quote from General Eisenhower. Struck in prized Proof condition, it arrives in a crystal-clear capsule.

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rhetoric. It is a constitutional speech contest; competitors must study and know the Constitution to succeed, preparing orations they have researched, written and rehearsed as well as impromptu speaking on randomly assigned constitutional topics.

The American Legion's relationship with Boy Scouts of America – the first youth program singled out by national resolution (at the first national convention, 1919) – grew to include numerous Americanism activities for Scouts, including ceremonies to respectfully retire worn-out U.S. flags.

American Legion National Commander James E. Powers wrote in the May 1963 *American Legion Magazine* that he had been challenged to define the term "Americanism" for a new

era. He wrote that of the 10 lines in the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution, seven refer to principles of Americanism.

"My real definition of Legion Americanism in 1963," Powers explained, "would be the living record of what Legionnaires do this year to improve community, state and nation in thousands of projects ... what they do to give backbone to law and order ... what they do to oppose militantly the endless drive to supplant our American way with dictatorship ... what they do to transmit American principles through our Boys States and Girls States... through teaching thousands of youngsters the rules of fair play on the baseball diamond ... what they do to make the Constitution of the United States a familiar text to

hundreds of thousands of boys and girls in our oratorical contest ... A full account of these deeds would be a definition of Americanism so huge it would fill an unabridged dictionary all by itself. It is a definition that is modern, progressive and alive."

Rich Anderson, the current American Legion Americanism Commission chairman, echoes that time-tested definition.

"True Americanism is an ideology that is continually nurtured within one's soul through individual daily actions, thoughts and beliefs in what their responsibilities are to be, blessed to live in one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all." 🌿

Jeff Stoffer is editor of The American Legion Magazine.

MOMENTS IN AMERICANISM HISTORY



JUNE 1, 1938 The first American Legion National Oratorical Contest is won by John Janson of Arizona in Norman, Okla.



AUG. 9, 1946 President Harry Truman, a life member of The American Legion, greets participants in The American Legion's Boys Forum of National Government, a federal version of the successful Boys State programs. Three years later, the program is renamed American Legion Boys Nation.

JAN. 28-29, 1950 American Legion National Commander George Craig calls an "All-American Conference" and invites other organizations to join in the effort to put up a united front against communism.

JUNE 21, 1989 The U.S. Supreme Court rules 5-4 in *Texas v. Johnson* that deliberate acts of U.S. flag desecration are protected under the First Amendment, triggering outrage from The American Legion.

JUNE 15, 1991 Richard Wilson of Arizona and Everett Miskelly of Mississippi take home the titles from the first American Legion Junior Shooting Sports national championships, at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.



AUG. 24, 1994 The American Legion forms a coalition to fight for a constitutional amendment to protect the U.S. flag from deliberate desecration. The Citizens Flag Alliance quickly grows to more than 140 groups.



JULY 28, 1995 Electronics giant Samsung chooses The American Legion to administer a scholarship fund of \$5 million, as a gesture of appreciation for U.S. military personnel who came to South Korea's aid to fight communist forces in the Korean War. The first 10 scholarships are awarded on Sept. 16, 1996.



MAY 5, 2011 The American Legion National Executive Committee passes a resolution formally establishing what would later be called the American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program.



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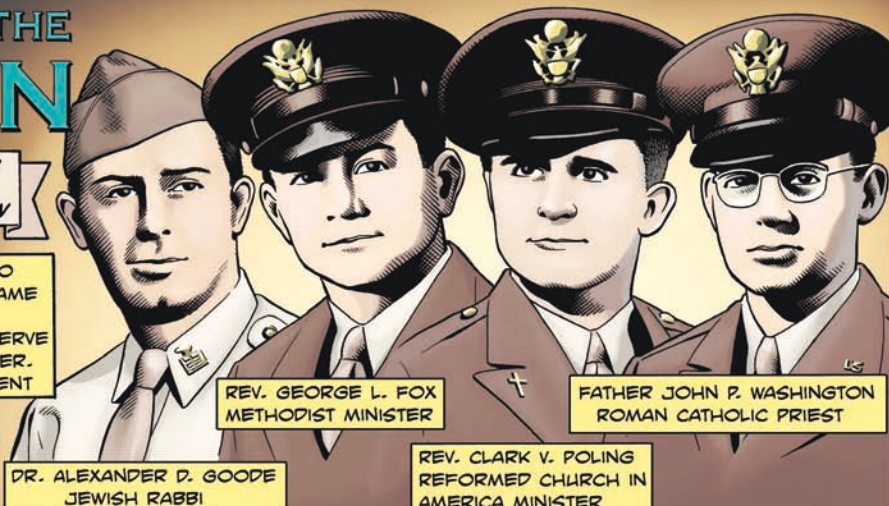
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LORE OF THE LEGION

STORY: **JEFF STOFFER**
ART: **GARY MARTIN**
COLOR: **MARCUS ESKOW**

FOUR FIRST LIEUTENANTS WHO TRAINED TOGETHER AND BECAME FRIENDS AT ARMY CHAPLAINS SCHOOL ARE ASSIGNED TO SERVE ABOARD THE USAT DORCHESTER. EACH REPRESENTS A DIFFERENT FAITH.



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JEWISH RABBI

REV. GEORGE L. FOX
METHODIST MINISTER

FATHER JOHN P. WASHINGTON
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST

REV. CLARK V. POLING
REFORMED CHURCH IN
AMERICA MINISTER

JAN. 23, 1943: THE *DORCHESTER*, A CONVERTED CIVILIAN LINER, STEAMS THROUGH 34-DEGREE NORTH ATLANTIC WATER TOWARD ARMY COMMAND BASE, GREENLAND, WITH 902 ABOARD.



AS THE *DORCHESTER* SINKS, THE CHAPLAINS LOCK ARMS ON THE RISING BOW, IN PRAYER FOR THE OTHERS. SURVIVORS IN THE WATER HEAR THEM SINGING HYMNS IN HEBREW, LATIN AND ENGLISH.



GERMAN U-BOAT 223 SPOTS THE *DORCHESTER* AT 12:55 A.M. ON FEB. 3 AND FIRES A TORPEDO THAT KNOCKS OUT POWER AND COMMUNICATIONS. SOLDIERS ARE TRAPPED BELOW DECK. PANIC SETS IN. MEN SCRAMBLE TO GET OFF THE SINKING VESSEL. THE CHAPLAINS TRY TO ORGANIZE AN ORDERLY EVACUATION.



U.S. COAST GUARD CUTTERS *ESCANABA* AND *COMANCHE* RESCUE MOST OF THE 230 SURVIVORS. A MAJORITY OF THE 672 WHO PERISHED DIED FROM HYPOTHERMIA IN THE FRIGID WATER. ONE SURVIVOR RECALLED SEEING THE CHAPLAINS IN THEIR FINAL ACT AS "THE FINEST THING I HAVE SEEN, OR HOPE TO SEE, THIS SIDE OF HEAVEN."



THE CHAPLAINS PASS OUT LIFE JACKETS AND HELP OTHERS ONTO LIFEBOATS. WHEN ALL LIFE JACKETS ARE GONE, THEY REMOVE THEIRS AND HAND THEM OVER TO THE MEN.



AMERICAN LEGION POSTS AROUND THE WORLD TODAY RECOGNIZE THE FIRST SUNDAY OF FEBRUARY AS FOUR CHAPLAINS DAY. THE AMERICAN LEGION HANDBOOK OUTLINES CEREMONIES WITH CANDLE LIGHTINGS, PRAYERS, SPEECHES AND "LEGION OF HONOR" AWARDS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO EXEMPLIFY THE SPIRIT OF THE FOUR CHAPLAINS.



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'AN INCREDIBLE HONOR'

Artist Chris Costello's coin design is a nod to The American Legion's Paris origins.

Chris Costello is a graphic designer, illustrator, typographer and fine artist, with a client list that includes Random House, Simon and Schuster, Oxford University Press and HarperCollins.

For the past decade, he's contributed to coin and medal designs through the U.S. Mint's Artistic Infusion program. Among them are the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders Congressional Gold Medal and the Mark Twain and Boys Town commemorative coins. He's also the designer of the obverse side of The American Legion's commemorative gold piece, which goes on sale next month.

In a conversation with *The American Legion Magazine*, Costello talked about his work for the Mint and the inspiration for his designs.

How did you end up as an artist and illustrator for the Mint?

I've been a coin collector since I was a kid. It was almost a dream of mine when I was younger to actually design a coin, but I had no idea how that was done or even how coins are made.

I found out about this particular opportunity in 2010, when the Mint was soliciting proposals from artists throughout the country who would not necessarily be put on staff but who were available for specific projects if needed. I kind of stumbled across it. I was in Puerto Rico at the time and was noticing all these wonderful new coin designs I was getting in change, like the 2009 cents commemorating the birth of Abraham Lincoln. There was also a Puerto Rico design for one of the quarters. I was curious because I hadn't seen these designs before, so when I got home, I went to the Mint website and saw there was a call for artists. I had about two weeks to put together a presentation, and then I was informed two months later that I had been selected to be a part of the Mint's Artistic Infusion program. That was pretty exciting.



What are some of the coins you've designed?

I designed the 2014 Great Smoky Mountains National Park quarter, the 2018 Block Island National Wildlife Refuge quarter and next year's San Antonio Missions National Historical Park quarter.

I particularly like the America the Beautiful quarters because they are in circulation; it's fun to have them turn up when you're going about your daily transactions. I also like the Native American dollar coin and any of the commemoratives that come through, especially the military-themed ones.

Every year they have something different, so it's always challenging to be asked to design commemorative silver or gold coins.

Describe your design for the American Legion gold coin.

I thought it would be interesting to see what I could do with a geometric and symmetrical layout. I tend to do asymmetrical designs balancing negative and positive space. The design commemorates the beginnings of The American Legion in Paris right after World



Artist Chris Costello in his studio

War I, with a head-on view of the Eiffel Tower and a V, which evokes victory. I rounded out the geometry with the outside of the American Legion emblem. It all fell together. I wanted to play with it and see if it would work, and I was pretty happy with the results.

Do you have veterans in your family?

My father is a veteran of the Korean War. He was a tail gunner on a B-29. I'm always inspired by my dad, so I think about what he would like to see on some of these coins. He's kind of a collector as well, and he's very proud of the work I've been doing. I think of his service when I'm doing these designs.

I've always had an appreciation for veterans' sacrifice and what they put on the line to serve and protect this country – their families and their lives. Any military-themed medal or coin I'm able to work on is just an incredible honor – especially one for The American Legion, which is the nation's largest veterans organization. I feel privileged to be able to contribute a design that will last and help tell its history into the future.

– Matt Grills

Look for interviews of the other American Legion coin artists in upcoming issues of the magazine.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

A grisly discovery

The U.N. Assistance Mission for Iraq and the U.N. Human Rights Office have confirmed the discovery of 202 mass-grave sites in areas once controlled by the Islamic State. As CNN reports, the grave sites are located in the Iraqi provinces of Nineveh, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din and Anbar. They are estimated to hold as many as 12,000 bodies. The U.N. agencies report that the mass graves include “women, children, elderly people and those with disabilities, members of Iraq’s armed forces, police and some foreign workers.”

“These graves contain the remains of those mercilessly killed for not conforming to ISIL’s twisted ideology and rule,” said U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet.



Media Bakery

MILITARY AFFAIRS

A pricey cup of joe

The Air Force is coming under heavy scrutiny for billing taxpayers \$1,280 – per item – for mugs specially designed to reheat drinks during flight, *Air Force Times* reports.

Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, noted that 25 of these mugs were ordered in 2018, with the 60th Aerial Port Squadron at Travis Air Force Base spending some \$56,000 to replace the pricey cups in the past three years.

Grassley pointed out that each cup cost \$693 as recently as 2016. In response, the Air Force plans to use 3-D printing technology to produce replacement cups for just 50 cents each.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Cyber schmyber

Japanese lawmakers were stunned to learn recently that the minister who heads up Japan’s cybersecurity office has never used a computer.

As *The New York Times* reports, Yoshitaka Sakurada during a parliamentary session “appeared confused when asked basic technology questions” and said “he had no need for the devices.” When asked “if nuclear power plants allowed the use of USB drives, a common technology widely considered to be a security risk, Mr. Sakurada did not seem to understand what they were.”

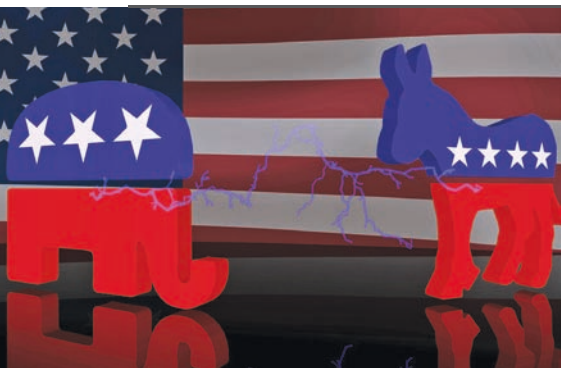
Pressed about his grasp of the cyber threats facing Japan, Sakurada responded, “When computer use is necessary, I order my employees or secretaries” to handle it, adding, “I don’t type on a computer.”

“I can’t believe that a person who never used a computer is in charge of cybersecurity measures,” said Masato Imai, an opposition lawmaker.

POLITICS

Split ticket

Twin sisters – one a Democrat, one a Republican – who ran for seats on the same county board in western Michigan will not be serving together this year. AP reports that Monica Sparks, a Democrat, won her race for a seat on the Kent County Board of Commissioners, while her twin sister, Republican Jessica Ann Tyson, lost.



VERBATIM

We’re in a situation now where every rule of decorum is now broken. That people say and do anything at any time anywhere. Both sides.

Republican strategist Frank Luntz, following a quarrel in the White House between President Trump and Democratic leaders Sen. Chuck Schumer and Rep. Nancy Pelosi. “We all walk away smaller,” Luntz added, predicting that both parties “will seek whatever kind of communication advantage they can get, and the public be damned.” Source: ABC News

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THE GREAT WAR 100

HONOR & REMEMBRANCE

'I look upon this as an opportunity'

Editor's note: Throughout the Great War's centennial, The American Legion Magazine will publish excerpts from the letters of D.B. "Bernard" Ryan of Albion, N.Y., who served as an Army infantry officer and helped found American Legion Sheret Post 35 in 1919.



**ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY SERVICE
FEB. 13, 1919**

Dear Mother –

I don't know what you will think of me – that I am dreadfully selfish and not very kind to you, I fear, but I have felt that this may be an opportunity which I could not afford to miss. Also – I may not get the appointment. But I have made, or am making today, application for a course in letters or law at the University of Paris and am agreeing to stay over for the completion of the course – i.e., until June 30 next. And that may mean some additional time tacked on, for I suppose that after completion of the course one will become a casual officer and may be shifted to some casual work at a camp or embarkation point or goodness knows where else. And so after giving you all these false alarms about the 37th Division coming home and your son with it, here I am disappointing you again. I believe that the Division really will reach home by April and may even sail between the 1st and 10th of March as now promised. It will probably take a month after its arrival to muster the division out. So I should probably be free in May or by the 1st of June. Now if I go to a university I may be able to get home and out of the service in July.

With the unsettled armistice conditions and the apparent arrogance of Germany, the newspapers over here, and, I suppose, in the States, have been intimating strongly that the situation is very delicate and there have been rumors that all of the scheduled sailings of combat divisions have been held up for this reason. But if there is going to be more excitement in the international situation I want to be over here where it is happening and you want me to be, don't you?

I look upon this as an opportunity. If I can get to the University of Paris to study international law and politics, to mingle with those persons over here who are world figures today and perhaps to form some acquaintances which will mean much to me in the future. With my education and executive ability I should be able to qualify in some secretarial or administrative capacity where such a position is well paid. And that is about what I have decided to go after.

I have applied to study Law, History, Letters, and Political Science and to remain here where an atmosphere of world thinking will be found during the next four months and, if my application is approved and I stay, may Providence grant that it may not cause you directly or indirectly additional pain but that I may truly make good use of the time and apply it to part payment of the tremendous debt of gratitude I owe to Providence and to you.

FEB. 27, 1919

Forgive me – my order to go to University of Paris arrived last night. I really should leave today but am not going until tomorrow & will arrive in Paris Friday night and report to school Saturday morning March 1st. Will write more upon arrival and will probably cable you my new address. Keep strong and well.

Love, Son

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—Dana S., Texas

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HONOR & REMEMBRANCE

Task force urges review of minorities' WWI valor awards

With American Legion support, a group of volunteers is pursuing the first-ever review of World War I veterans who may have been denied the Medal of Honor due to discrimination.

Established by the U.S. World War One Centennial Commission, the Valor Medals Review Task Force is starting with the records of approximately 70 African-American soldiers – in particular, those worthy of the nation's highest military award who may have been downgraded to a Distinguished Service Cross or received a French Croix de Guerre with palm.

"We're not going in with any number in mind," says Jeffrey Sammons, professor of history at New York University and co-author of *"Harlem's Rattlers and the Great War."*

"We want this to be as unbiased and apolitical as possible, and to let the evidence lead us where it may."

The U.S. military conducted valor award reviews for minority veterans of World War II and subsequent conflicts, but not those who served in World War I. The posthumous awarding of Medals of Honor to Cpl. Freddie Stowers in 1991 and Sgt. Henry Johnson in 2015 set a precedent for challenging a 1919 review that resulted in zero Medal of Honor awards for black veterans and few for other minorities.

At its 100th National Convention in August, The American Legion passed Resolution 109, which calls for legislation lifting statutes of limitation that may impede proper review of minority veterans' World War I records that support consideration for a Medal of Honor.

The initiative can be traced to a lecture by Sammons at Park University in Missouri, home of the George S. Robb Centre for the Study of the Great War. Two years ago, Timothy Westcott, the center's director, invited Sammons to speak on Robb, a white officer with the 369th Regiment and a 1912 Park University alum who received a Medal of Honor for leading an assault near Séchault, France, while wounded.

While examining Robb's records and a Medal of Honor index sheet, Sammons discovered that Sgt. William Butler of Salisbury, Md., of the 369th was nominated for the award the same day as Robb. In fact, Robb had praised Butler for his heroism on Aug. 14, 1918, when he saved his commanding officer and other men from Germans who raided their trench.

As a history consultant to the centennial commission, Sammons mentioned the case for Butler to be considered for a Medal of Honor, as well as Burton Holmes of Clemson, S.C. A private with the 371st Infantry Regiment, Holmes posthumously received the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in France on Sept. 28, 1918.



Members of the 369th Infantry, formerly the 15th New York Guard Regiment, arrive in New York City in 1919. The regiment has been known as the Famous 369th, the Harlem Hellfighters and the Black Rattlers. War Department photo

When Sammons suggested a broader review for black veterans of World War I, the commission agreed. It formed a task force that includes Sammons, Westcott, two retired major generals, a Medal of Honor historian and a supporting group of researchers.

Under Westcott's direction, Park University will do a deep dive into archival and genealogical documentation on each African-American who received the Distinguished Service Cross, Croix de Guerre or Médaille militaire.

A Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 318 in Parkville, Mo., Westcott says it's important the nation does its due diligence in regard to minorities who served with valor in the Great War. "The military has at times been a leader in social change," he says. "This project should continue that long tradition of righting a possible wrong."

Dwight Mears is a retired Army major and author of *"The Medal of Honor: The Evolution of America's Highest Military Decoration."* Well-versed in the statutes and policies behind the medal, Mears will provide guidance on which awards should be upgraded, and legal models on cases where there may not be direct evidence of discrimination.

Until the 1990s, not a single African-American had earned a modern Medal of Honor. That seems statistically unlikely if you compare that to the numbers in combat, and African-Americans noticed that, Mears says. "Medals don't have a lot of value if you don't award them equitably. And if you tarnish what that medal means to an entire segment of the nation, you significantly dilute the meaning of that decoration."

Sammons says no group was singled out for criticism and condemnation like black soldiers, particularly black officers.

He knows of at least eight African-Americans who were nominated for a Medal of Honor. All were downgraded except Stowers, whose nomination was not acted upon. Though he has found affidavits for the nominees, Sammons says locating such documentation is not an easy process. "It's not going to be done in months," he says.

– Matt Grills

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EDUCATION

GI Bill benefits and health care



Q: Is it possible to get health care through VA since I am currently enrolled in school and have no income besides my monthly housing allowance? When I apply, will

I have to show my DD-214?

A: To receive health care from VA, you must enroll in the program online at **vets.gov**, or call toll-free 1-877-222-8387. A new identification card is available to veterans to prove military status without carrying a DD-214. Submit an application for the ID card online at **vets.gov**. Approved applicants can download and print an image of the ID while waiting for the actual card.

Valerie Heffner is a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Apache Junction, Ariz. askvalerie@legion.org



Photo courtesy Post 106

CENTENNIAL

Post 106, Hasbrouck Heights, N.J.

Capt. James B. Scarr American Legion Post 106 received its initial charter on Sept. 9, 1919, and by November a committee to find a post home had been established and a dedicated fund set up. It was 1924 when the post held its first meeting in its initial home, a former church.

SHARE YOUR POST'S LEGACY

Upload stories, photos and videos of your American Legion post's history.

www.legion.org/centennial



Cpl. Anton Anderson drags a simulated casualty during a beach ambush scenario as part of a leadership evaluation at Marine Corps Base Hawaii. DoD

BY THE NUMBERS

A salute to African-American military service

2.1 million

Black military veterans nationwide

30.2

Percent of active-duty enlisted women who are African-American (2016)

17.1

Percent of active-duty enlisted men who are African-American (2016)

20,000+

Black Marine Corps recruits who received training at Montford Point camp in North Carolina during World War II

21

African-Americans who received the Medal of Honor for actions during the Vietnam War

7,243

Deaths of active-duty black servicemembers in Vietnam

3,075

Deaths of active-duty black servicemembers in the Korean War

901,896

African-Americans who served during World War II

24

Percent of the 500,000 U.S. military personnel deployed to the Middle East during the Persian Gulf War who were African-American

350,000+

Blacks who served in American Expeditionary Forces units on the Western Front in World War I

Sources: 2016 American Community Survey, Statista, Congressional Research Service, National WWII Museum, U.S. Army

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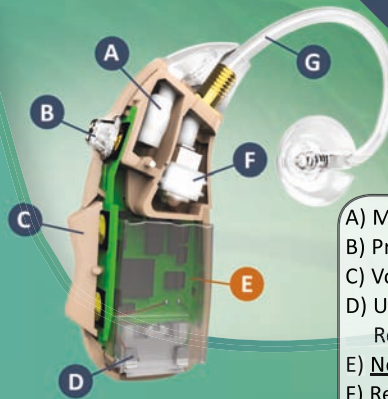


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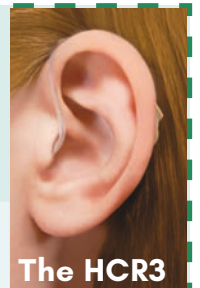
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101ST NATIONAL CONVENTION

Where to stay in Indianapolis

Here is the list of department assignments for hotels during the 101st National Convention in Indianapolis – home of American Legion National Headquarters – in August. Those planning to attend should seek information from their department adjutant about accommodations.

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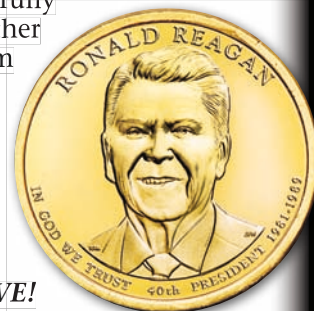
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FOCUS ON FINANCES



J.J. MONTANARO

Spring is just around the corner, and you may be contemplating a shift in your residence. Tread carefully. If you've experienced it, you know buyer's remorse can be painful. That's especially true if you've signed on the dotted line for something as substantial as a home. A mistake can jeopardize your financial flexibility and

health – physical and mental.

Across the country, the real estate run-up since the Great Recession has resulted in record home prices that make it even more important to avoid a home-buying misstep.

Before you make a move, ask yourself these five questions.

▪ **Is my credit squared away?** A “yes” means you've reviewed your credit report at annualcreditreport.com and don't see any red flags or incorrect information. You've eliminated as much debt as possible and avoided applying for new credit for several months before you drop your application. The last thing you want is a surprise as you start the process for what will likely be your biggest financial obligation.

Why it matters: Access to a loan at the best possible interest rate hinges on how you've handled credit.

▪ **Does this home fit in my (realistic) budget?** If you can cap your housing payment at 28 percent of your gross monthly income, you should be on track – although that number could fluctuate given your location and financial situation. The total should include principal and interest plus property taxes and homeowners insurance. Beyond that, you've got to budget for homeowners association dues, maintenance and the like. If you're trying to keep your options open, spending less on the biggest line item in your budget is not a bad thing.

Why it matters: Overreach on this purchase, and you could find yourself a prisoner in your own home.

▪ **Am I stressed out?** Buying a home is a big deal, so a little tension on the brink of the purchase is probably the norm. However, if you're waking up in a sweat-soaked bed or losing sleep wondering if you are about to overspend, that may be your oh-so-smart inner self saying “no.” Remember, just because someone will lend you money doesn't mean you should borrow it.

Why it matters: No one understands the nuances of your finances like you do. Use that knowledge to steer clear of a mistake.

▪ **Am I in it for the long haul?** At an absolute minimum, you've got to be committed to homeownership for three years – and longer is better. Remember, it could cost 10 to 15 percent of your home's value to buy and sell. If a slow housing market or an unexpected PCS will make you a reluctant or unprepared landlord, you may want to reconsider buying.

Why it matters: Real estate prices ebb and flow, but the long-term trend has been up. You don't want to be forced to sell in a valley.

▪ **Have I built a comfortable stash of cash?** Yes, you need cash to buy a home, even if you're going to use a VA loan with no down payment. You could need money for closing costs, furnishings or maintenance. Heck, I've had to fix my roof, replace broken appliances and repair the air conditioning – all in a relatively new house.

Why it matters: As a homeowner, I can say unequivocally that a house offers a never-ending stream of opportunities to spend (or have to spend) money. Be prepared.

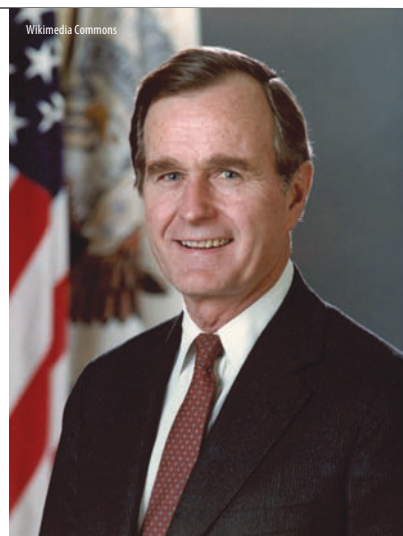
J.J. Montanaro is a certified financial planner with USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. Submit questions for him online.

 www.legion.org/usaa/focusonfinances

VERBATIM

The rest of his life was a perennial effort to prove himself worthy of his salvation on that distant morning. To him, his life was no longer his own. There were always more missions to undertake, more lives to touch and more love to give.

Jon Meacham, biographer of President George H.W. Bush, describing how Bush, as a 20-year-old naval aviator in World War II, parachuted from his burning plane; the rest of his crew perished. Bush “was America's last great soldier-statesman, a 20th-century founding father,” Meacham added. “He governed with virtues that most closely resemble those of Washington and of Adams, of T.R. and of FDR, of Truman and of Eisenhower, of men who believed in causes larger than themselves.” *Source: USA Today*



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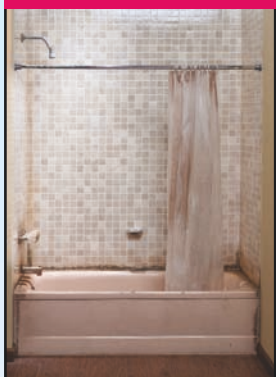


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CAREERS

In crafting a résumé, write to the future



Carefully consider this important fact: résumé writing is all about the future. Your challenge is to write a powerful document that clearly and concisely communicates “This is who I am” based on your current career objectives. Résumé writing is not about rehashing the past; rather, it’s about positioning yourself for the future.

Here’s an example: If you’ve been an Army foreign language linguist and want to transition to a career in marketing communications, write a résumé that says “I am a well-qualified marketing communications professional,” not “I am a well-qualified foreign language linguist who wants to be a marketing communications professional.”

Many of the skills required for foreign language translation are the same required for marketing communications positions (e.g., writing, editing, data interpretation and analysis, reporting, presentation) – the same skills this linguist should highlight in his or her résumé. Let your readers “see” you in the positions you are targeting by focusing on the qualifications you have that align with the new position. Remember, your résumé is not simply an historical overview

of your experience; it’s a document designed to sell you and your career.

Here’s another example: If you’ve been a Marine Corps tank mechanic and now want to work as an automotive mechanic, painting the right picture of who you are is even easier. Instead of boasting on your résumé that you’re a talented tank mechanic, you want to focus on your experience in vehicle maintenance and repair, parts inventory, and related skills. There’s no need to focus on information (e.g., tanks) that’s irrelevant to your future career opportunities.

Companies hire the talent they need today and often have little time to devote to your personal learning curve. Therefore, you must communicate – in the right language and keywords – the fact that you already have the skills, talents and competencies they seek in a qualified candidate.

A word of caution: honesty counts! Although you want to write to the future and position yourself for new opportunities, you must always be 100 percent truthful on your résumé. If you ever have to “defend” something you’ve written, you will have lost that opportunity.

Wendy Enelow is co-author of “Modernize Your Résumé: Get Noticed ... Get Hired” and “Expert Résumés for Military-to-Civilian Transitions.”





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CAPITOL HILL

New veterans in Congress

With the 116th Congress underway, Veterans Campaign, a nonpartisan organization focused on encouraging and preparing veterans for service in civic leadership, and *Military Times* have released post-elections reports. Among the findings:

31 Veterans in Congress who served in Operation Enduring Freedom and/or Operation Iraqi Freedom

6 Female veterans in the new Congress, the highest number in history

95 Total number of veterans in the 116th Congress

19 Number of members in the freshman class who are veterans, the highest number in a decade

Leading Acid Reflux Pill Becomes an Anti-Aging Phenomenon

Clinical studies show breakthrough acid reflux treatment also helps maintain vital health and helps protect users from the serious conditions that accompany aging such as fatigue and poor cardiovascular health



**by David Waxman
Seattle Washington:**

A clinical study on a leading acid reflux pill shows that its key ingredient relieves digestive symptoms while suppressing the inflammation that contributes to premature aging in men and women.

And, if consumer sales are any indication of a product's effectiveness, this 'acid reflux pill turned anti-aging phenomenon' is nothing short of a miracle.

Sold under the brand name AloeCure, it was already backed by clinical data documenting its ability to provide all day and night relief from heartburn, acid reflux, constipation, irritable bowel, gas, bloating, and more.

But soon doctors started reporting some incredible results...

"With AloeCure, my patients started reporting less joint pain, more energy, better sleep, stronger immune systems... even less stress and better skin, hair, and nails" explains Dr. Liza Leal; a leading integrative health specialist and company spokesperson.

AloeCure contains an active ingredient that helps improve digestion by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Scientists now believe that this acid imbalance is what contributes to painful inflammation throughout the rest of the body.

The daily allowance of AloeCure has shown to calm this inflammation which is why AloeCure is so effective.

Relieving other stressful symptoms related to GI health like pain, bloating, fatigue, cramping, constipation, diarrhea, heartburn, and nausea.

Now, backed with new clinical studies, AloeCure is being recommended by doctors everywhere to help improve digestion, calm painful inflammation, soothe joint pain, and even reduce the appearance of wrinkles – helping patients to look and feel decades younger.

FIX YOUR GUT & FIGHT INFLAMMATION

Since hitting the market, sales for AloeCure have taken off and there are some very good reasons why.

To start, the clinical studies have been impressive. Participants taking the active ingredient in AloeCure saw a stunning 100% improvement in digestive symptoms, which includes fast and lasting relief from reflux.

Users also experienced higher energy levels and endurance, relief from chronic discomfort and better sleep. Some even reported healthier

looking skin, hair, and nails.

A healthy gut is the key to a reducing swelling and inflammation that can wreak havoc on the human body. Doctors say this is why AloeCure works on so many aspects of your health.

AloeCure's active ingredient is made from the healing compound found in Aloe vera. It is both safe and healthy. There are also no known side effects.

Scientists believe that it helps improve digestive and immune health by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Research has shown that this acid imbalance contributes to painful inflammation throughout your entire body and is why AloeCure seems to be so effective.

EXCITING RESULTS FROM PATIENTS

To date over 5 million bottles of AloeCure have been sold, and the community seeking non-pharma therapy for their GI health continues to grow.

According to Dr. Leal, her patients are absolutely thrilled with their results and are often shocked by how fast it works.

"For the first time in years, they are free from concerns about their digestion and almost every other aspect of their health," says Dr. Leal, "and I recommend it to everyone who wants to improve GI health without resorting to drugs, surgery, or OTC medications."

"I was always in 'indigestion hell.' Doctors put me on all sorts of antacid remedies. Nothing worked. Dr. Leal recommended I try AloeCure. And something remarkable happened... Not only were all the issues I had with my stomach gone - completely gone - but I felt less joint pain and I was able to actually sleep through the night."

With so much positive feedback, it's easy to see why the community of believers is growing and sales for the new pill are soaring.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND ALOEURE

AloeCure is a pill that's taken just once daily. The pill is small. Easy to swallow. There are no harmful side effects and it does not require a prescription.

The active ingredient is a rare Aloe Vera component known as acemannan.

Made from of 100% organic Aloe Vera, AloeCure uses a proprietary process that results in the highest quality, most bio-available levels of acemannan known to exist.

According to Dr. Leal and several of her col-

leagues, improving the pH balance of your stomach and restoring gut health is the key to revitalizing your entire body.

When your digestive system isn't healthy, it causes unwanted stress on your immune system, which results in inflammation in the rest of the body.

The recommended daily allowance of acemannan in AloeCure has been proven to support digestive health, and calm painful inflammation without side effects or drugs.

This would explain why so many users are experiencing impressive results so quickly.

REVITALIZE YOUR ENTIRE BODY

With daily use, AloeCure helps users look and feel decades younger and defend against some of the painful inflammation that accompanies aging and can make life hard.

By buffering stomach acid and restoring gut health, AloeCure calms painful inflammation and will help improve digestion... soothe aching joints... reduce the appearance of wrinkles and help restore hair and nails ... manage cholesterol and oxidative stress... and improve sleep and brain function... without side effects or expense.

Readers can now reclaim their energy, vitality, and youth regardless of age or current level of health.

One AloeCure Capsule Daily

- Helps End Digestion Nightmares
- Helps Calm Painful Inflammation
- Soothes Stiff & Aching Joints
- Reduces appearance of Wrinkles & Increases Elasticity
- Manages Cholesterol & Oxidative Stress
- Supports Healthy Immune System
- Improves Sleep & Brain Function

HOW TO GET ALOECURE

This is the official nationwide release of the new AloeCure pill in the United States. And so, the company is offering our readers up to 3 FREE bottles with their order.

This special give-away is available for the next 48-hours only. All you have to do is call **TOLL-FREE 1-800-334-0130** and provide the operator with the Free Bottle Approval Code: AC100. The company will do the rest.

Important: Due to AloeCure's recent media exposure, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back. Those who miss the 48-hour deadline may lose out on this free bottle offer.

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COMRADES

How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206, fax (317) 630-1280, e-mail reunions@legion.org** or submit information via our website, **www.legion.org/reunions**.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, The American Legion Magazine will publish a group's listing only once a year.**

AIR FORCE / ARMY AIR FORCES

435th OMS Enroute Maint, Gatlinburg, TN, 10/9-13, Stan Miller, (910) 922-4383, flymiller@mindspring.com

ARMY

1st Bn 40th FA, Nashville, TN, 7/28-8/2, James Bishop, (209) 952-0535, james@jabishop.com;
1st Trans Bn / Corpus Christi Bay, Charleston, SC, 5/3-8, Bruce Binns, (269) 547-0186, ccbaypiper@gmail.com; **7th Sqdn 17th Air Cav "Ruthless Riders - Palehorse"**, Fort Bragg, NC, 8/21-25, Joe Wirth, (201) 390-5350, joseph.wirth@yahoo.com; **36th & 88th Trans Grps**, Pigeon Forge, TN, 4/30-5/5, Hoss Taylor, (904) 335-7402, vietnam566th@yahoo.com; **95th Inf Div**, Lawton, OK, 5/16-19, Terry Earnest, (816) 858-5967, terryandlorna@yahoo.com; **815th Eng Bn / 102nd Eng Co & Attached Units**, St. Robert, MO, 5/17-19, Frank Sheeman, (512) 633-3864, 815thengr@gmail.com; **Army Security Agency (ASA) Okinawa Assn**, Perrysburg, OH, 9/18-22, James Norrbom, (952) 890-2384, jhnnorrbom@aol.com; **Bamberg MP (1970-1975)**, Mackinaw City, MI, 9/20-22, John Mella, (906) 774-0538, ella_john@yahoo.com; **C Btry 1st Msl Bn 62nd Arty**, Pacific, MO, 5/18, Billy Smith, (618) 751-0765, brsmith5912@yahoo.com; **Echo Co 1/5 1st Air Cav (Vietnam, 1969-1971)**, Gatlinburg, TN, 5/2-5, Terry "Mother" Fauquher, (317) 578-4791, tmfauquher@aol.com; **OCS Alumni Assn**, Columbus, GA, 4/28-5/1, Nancy lonoff, (813) 917-4309, ocsalumniunion@gmail.com; **OCS (All Branches)**, Columbus, GA, 4/28-5/2, Nancy lonoff, (813) 917-4309, ocsreunion@gmail.com

MARINES

Basic School Class 5-69, Quantico, VA, 5/7-11, Joe Howard, (540) 720-0259, jlheach1@cs.com; **Basic School Hotel Co 8-69**, Arlington, VA, 6/6-9, Craig Hullinger, (309) 634-5557, craighullinger@gmail.com; **Hotel Co 2nd Bn 7th Marines (Vietnam, 1965-1970)**, San Diego, 6/20-24, Dan Steiner, (618) 567-4077, dsteiner49@yahoo.com; **Nat'l Montford Point Marines Assn**, Charlotte, NC, 8/28-31, Joseph Geeter, (610) 608-5786, publicrelations@montfordpointmarines.com; **Pit 3013 (Parris Island MCRD, July 1967)**, Tampa, FL, 7/10-14, Harry Hopwood, (352) 543-6879, usmarineck@att.net

NAVY

Albemarle, Charleston, SC, 5/3-8, Bruce Binns, (269) 547-0186, ccbaypiper@gmail.com; **Ashland LSD 1 & 48**, Fairview Heights, IL, 6/13-16, Robert Parrish, (217) 871-9706, rep1933@yahoo.com; **Ashtabula AO 51**, Deerfield, IL, 6/18-22, Paul Stein, (608) 845-9311, ashtabula2019@gmail.com; **Atka AGB 3**, Wilmington, NC, 4/22-24, Mike Kovacs, (609) 506-7981, mikekovacs@hotmail.com

Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life memberships by their posts. **This does not include**

a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership. Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.**

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.** Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

com; **Davidson DE/FF 1045**, Seattle, 10/16-20, Mike Peck, (952) 922-8536, davidson1045@msn.com. com; **Decatur DD 936 & DDG 31/73**, Las Vegas, 9/12-15, Dave Baker, (801) 525-4646, tony0705@aol.com; **Downes DE/FF 1070**, Branson, MO, 6/20-23, Russell & Shannon Metzger, (765) 535-8133, ussdownessf1070@gmail.com; **Essex CV/CVA/CVS 9 & LHD 2**, Louisville, KY, 8/11-18, Eugene Schmidt, (616) 534-7170, schmidt.eugenej@att.net; **Fremont APA 44**, Sevierville, TN, 8/21-25, David Lape, (573) 887-6100, davidlape@live.com; **Grayback SSG/LPSS/SS 574**, Reno, NV, 5/7-9, Mike Dimmick, (702) 810-8056, madimmick@cox.net; **Grenadier SS 525**, Albuquerque, NM, 8/23-25, Bill Robinson, (575) 937-2382, worob40@live.com; **Hoel DDG 13**, Rapid City, SD, 9/12-15, John Helsley, (909) 234-8238, uss.hoel.ddg13.2019reunion@gmail.com; **John Young DD 973**, Jacksonville, FL, 3/15-17, Michael Trotta, (727) 505-4222, reunion@dd973.org; **Klonidike AD/AR 22**, San Antonio, 9/13-16, Dennis Case, (309) 299-0275, denniscase@gmail.com; **Manley DD 940**, Warwick, RI, 5/1-5, Harold Kane, (609) 409-7737, manleypres940@gmail.com; **Midway Class Reunion ("Three Sisters") - Midway CV 41, Franklin D. Roosevelt CV 42 & Coral Sea CV 43**, San Diego, 5/6-10, Tim Miller, (619) 942-2554, ussmidway.net; **Mine Div 113 (Vietnam)**, St. Petersburg, FL, 10/3-6, Don Hecke, (501) 620-0593, don9329@hotmail.com; **Nimitz CVN 68 Assn**, Biloxi, MS, 5/5-10, Bill Paschall, (910) 622-0518, bpldounret@gmail.com; **NMCB 3**, Tucson, AZ, 10/3-7, Victor Horvath, (832) 722-9434, bigbuzzard@outlook.com; **Ogden LPD 5**, Charleston, SC, 9/26-29, Jim Williamson, (850) 380-1031, ussogdenlpd5@gmail.com; **Robert E. Lee SSBN/SSN 601**, San Diego, 4/24-28, Joe White, (405) 410-9206, joewhite727@gmail.com; **Steinaker DD 863**, Savannah, GA, 4/25-28, Kenneth Kohnen, (904) 654-7321, ken.kohnen@yahoo.com; **Stickell DD 888**, Newport, RI, 10/28-30, Don O'Brien, (401) 847-1706, francisdanlobrien@gmail.com; **Takelma ATF 113 (with Nat'l Assn of Fleet Tug Sailors)**, Green Bay, WI, 9/3-7, Dick Schreifels, (651) 455-1876,

richard_rosemary@msn.com; **Tin Can Sailors 2019 Midwest Bull Session**, Kearney, NE, 4/12-13, Greg Jensen, (308) 708-2106, gwjensen@frontiernet.net

IN SEARCH OF

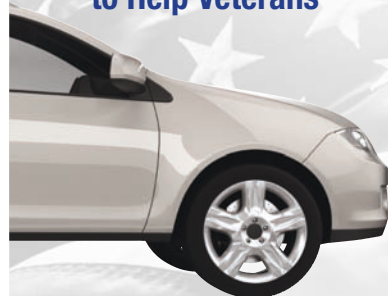
1st Bn 14th Inf 4th Inf Div D Co (Vietnam, Feb-Aug 1969), Marty O'Donnell, (607) 546-8274, modonnell@htva.net
1st Inf Div 7th FA Bn Serv Btry (Sweinfert, Germany, 1953-1955), Dick Felts, (518) 357-3317, nanjan35@aol.com
7th Psych Bn (Da Nang, 1969-1971), Robert Temples, (813) 641-3000, templesr14@gmail.com
50th Sig Bn Corps R&M Ctr Opn Co (Camp Sendai, Japan, & Korea, 1953-1955), Dick Downey, (480) 423-9414
257th Sig Co 106th Sig Grp USAREUR (Sept 1961-Sept 1965), David Jones, (910) 612-8976, davyjoan@att.net
326th Med 101st Abn Div (1967-1968), Frank Ramisch, (320) 629-3361, mnfrank47@gmail.com
512th Heavy Equip Maint Co (General Support) (Korea, 1966-1968), Richard Thompson, (918) 225-5062, rthompson3916@gmail.com
608th Trans Co (Dong Ba Thin, Vietnam), John Drew, (770) 565-4500, wrenchbender4@aol.com
Saint Paul CA 73, John Hannabach, (404) 401-5903, hannajo73@comcast.net
VA-212 "Rampant Riders" Line Crew (Moffett Field, CA, 1956-1958), Joe Lee, (678) 458-0463

TAPS

Donald R. Johnson, Dept. of Virginia. Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Vice Chmn. 2000-2009.
James P. Schuback, Dept. of District of Columbia. Dept. Cmdr. 2016-2017 and Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Memb. 2015-2018.
Ray M. Weaver, Dept. of Florida. Dept. Cmdr. 1996-1997, Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1997-1998 and Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1995-1996.



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Of course I should clean my windows. But privacy is important, too.

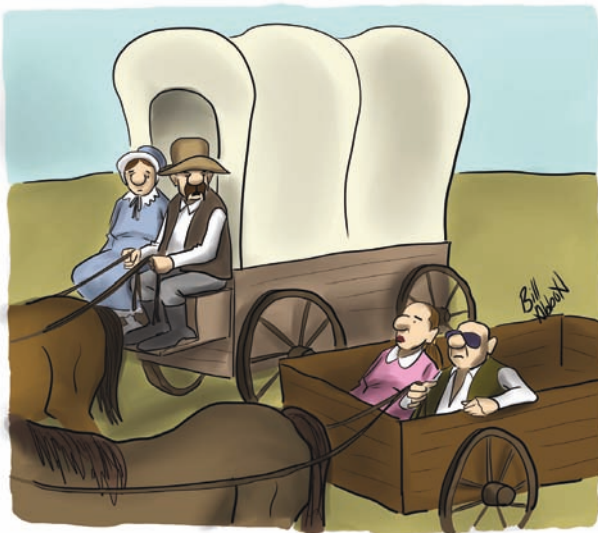
LAST NIGHT I dreamed of a beautiful walk on a sandy beach. That explains the footprints I found in the litter box this morning.

I GOT a really cute dog and decided to call him Threemiles. It sounds great to say I walk Threemiles twice a day.

SEEN ON A TOMBSTONE: “I told you I was sick!”

A WOMAN woke up with a start one morning. Her husband asked what was the matter, and she replied, “I just had a dream that you gave me a pearl necklace for Valentine’s Day. What do you think it means?”

“You’ll know tonight,” her husband said. That evening, he came home with a small package and gave it to his wife. Delighted, she opened it – to find a book titled “The Meaning of Dreams.”



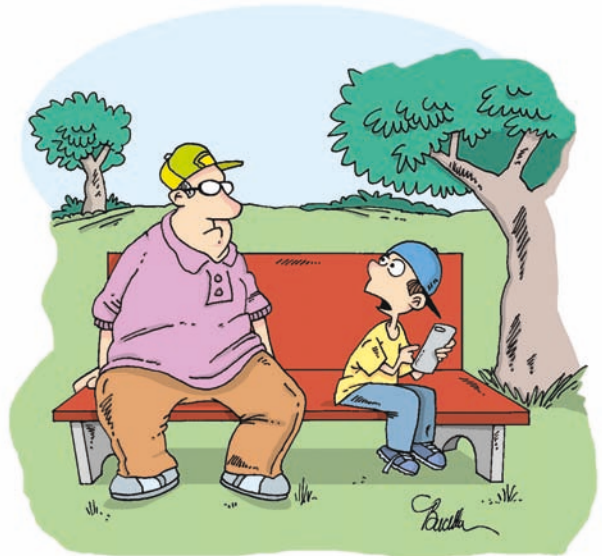
“Convertible. Must be nice.”

JUST BEFORE I was deployed to Iraq, I broke the news to my 8-year-old son. “I’m going to be away for a long time,” I said. “I’m going to Iraq.”

“Why?” he asked. “Don’t you know there’s a war going on over there?”

– Submitted by Thomas Cioppa, as published in Reader’s Digest’s “Humor in Uniform”

Do you have a funny military-related anecdote? To share with Reader’s Digest, visit rd.com/submit. Remember to include your American Legion post name and number.



“I don’t know cursive, and you don’t know emoji. I’d say that makes us even.”



“Your rich, deceased uncle would like you to know he found a way to take it with him.”

THAT AWKWARD MOMENT when the entire math class is discussing whether the answer is 15 or 16, and your answer is -1,053.

I’D RATHER SPEND 10 minutes rearranging the dishwasher to accommodate something than spend 30 seconds washing it by hand.

SOMEONE broke into my house and stole my limbo stick. How low can you go?

THAT GUY is so conceited that on his last birthday he congratulated his mother on Facebook.

MY BOSS told me, “Don’t dress for the job you have. Dress for the job you want.” When I showed up in Ghostbusters gear, he said I was fired.

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